GOD OF WAR

LORE & LEGENDS

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As told to Rick Barba

Dark Horse Books

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GOD OF WAR: LORE AND LEGENDS
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PREFACE

Sunlight is rare in Wildwoods these days. Nonstop snow falls faintly, day after day. Some mornings we hunt food and chop firewood. Other days we clear lost souls from the forest near our compound: Draugr, Reaver, Hel-Walker, sometimes a beast or hissing Revenant. We work so well together now. Even the tough ones fall fast.

But most of our time is spent at the hearth. During the long hours, Father tends the fire and seasons the stew. Sometimes he tries to decipher scrolls we collected on our journey. Are my rune lessons finally sinking in? Hard to say. Meanwhile, I've taken to revisiting this journal. Its loose leaf pages are easy to move, so I've spent time reorganizing and rebinding them into chapters that are more useful for reference.

As I reread old entries, I add to them. I'm older, and I know so many new things now.

When I do this, I feel Mother's presence.

She taught me so much—how to read runes, how to hear the forest. She told me the tales of Norse gods, giants, men, and monsters. On our walks, she'd show me how to see with *"wide-open eyes"*—even familiar things, things I thought I already knew. Over time, she said, a watchful person sees familiar things differently. Some seem brighter, some darker. Some even offer vapory glimpses of the future.

Mother also taught me how to write about what I see. That's why I sense her now. Together, after one of our treks, we'd review what I'd written. She'd ask simple questions about my observations—questions I sometimes couldn't answer. This often upset me.

She would say: Just open your eyes wider and look again.

That's what I tried to do with my journal. With help from Father and Mimir, I've reviewed our journey, step by step, with wider eyes. I reread my original observations then added anything I've learned since. In some cases, I attached new pages. But anything I've added is clearly marked as such. Mother always demanded honesty as well as clarity in my writing.

And so, I will honor her memory, even as I sense her near me now.

There's one more thing I want to mention here at the start. It's about Father.

When firewood is stacked high and the larder is full of smoked meat, Father and I often *"relax"* by training in the yard. He is a warrior, after all. He likes to keep his skills sharp, and truth be told, so do I. My Talon Bow can never match his Leviathan Axe for sheer power, but if I choose the right arrow, its sting can weaken even powerful foes.

Father is pleased with my agility and timing. He actually tells me so!

And this is the thing.

Since I was very young, I could *"hear"* feelings in animals. On rare occasions, I could even hear Mother. But trying to probe Father's feelings was like banging on a Traveler Champion's shield. Before our journey, his long silences roared in my head. He guarded something cold inside. I could see it in his eyes. And when Mother died, they seemed to get colder.

But then something happened in Alfheim.

It was early in our journey. We had retrieved the Light of Alfheim (a terribly hard task) and were canoeing back to Tyr's Bridge. As Father paddled, I mentioned Mother and I saw his eyes go cold again.

But when I challenged him, Father seemed to burst. His pain rolled over me like a hot wave. He said: *"Do not mistake my silence for lack of grief! Mourn how you wish. Leave me to my own."*

And then I understood. I apologized. At that moment, things changed between us.

It was just as Mother predicted. Eyes I'd seen so many times before—eyes I thought I knew so well—suddenly changed because I opened my own eyes and saw them differently. I'd always seen Father as cold and uncaring. In truth, he is exactly the opposite.

And that's why I've pored through my journal, word for word, looking at what I saw then, and adding what I know now.

I mean, I'm older, right? I'm not just a boy. At least, I don't feel like a boy. Father doesn't call me *"boy"* anymore, unless I complain about his stew.

And so, Father talks to me now.

Okay, not a lot. Sometimes just a word or two: *"Fine shot!"* or *"Does it need more salt?"* But sometimes, late at night, he stares into the orange embers and recalls Mother to me—or, as I like to think of her, Laufey the Giantess Warrior, she who first wielded Leviathan. So cool! Even Father didn't know that. And as I've reread and revised this journal, I've come to realize something.

This is Father's story, almost as much as it is mine.

Chapter I

Mother's Lessons

This section gathers some journal entries I wrote before Mother died and we took her ashes to the four-finger peak in Jötunheim.

I was only six when she first handed me a leather-bound sheaf of blank pages. She told me how important it is to leave stories behind as you move through life. Then she explained how my first two years of writing would be *"practice."*

Sure enough, when I turned eight, we had a ceremony. Mother made her rosemary venison stew (my favorite) on the fire pit, and then we tossed my practice pages—*all* of them—into the flames.

I was a little sad about that, but it also made me excited to start my *real* journal.

Funny, I remember Father sitting in the corner with a frown.

He never really understood the purpose of Mother's lessons, or all this writing stuff. I admit that I didn't either back then, but I didn't care because doing things with Mother was always fun.

We could just gather wild herbs in the woods, and it was an adventure! Every night she told tales of the nine realms, even when I was so sick with fever I couldn't sit up straight. When I closed my eyes, I saw animals, dragons, giant serpents, angry gods, great ships and armies, and wolves who chased the sun and moon across the sky.

As I read through these old pages now, I hear Mother's low voice. I hear the prayer she taught me:

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Here's the translation, if you can't read runes:

Lo, There do I see my Father
Lo, There do I see my Mother and
My Brothers and my Sisters
Lo, There do I see the line of my people back to the beginning
Lo, They do call to me
They bid me take my place among them.
Where thine enemies have been vanquished
Where the brave shall live Forever
Nor shall we mourn but rejoice for
those that have died the glorious death.

I spoke a version of this prayer when I touched Mother for the last time in our hut as Father built the pyre outside.

I was sad . . . sadder than I'd ever felt . . . sadder than I could ever feel again, I'm sure of that. Everything hurt inside, and it felt cold. But when I touched her and said *"Lo, there do I see my Mother,"* I closed my eyes and saw Mother holding her hand out, waiting for me.

It's hard to explain. She looked happy, and I knew that look in her eyes, the one she always got before lessons began. She'd say, *"Come on, Atreus. You have much to learn, and time is shorter than you think."* I knew then that she was ready to go.

I guess I sort of knew, even then, that Mother would guide us to the Mountain somehow. But now, as I reread these entries, I wonder: What about this long, dark Fimbulwinter, with all the strange things moving in the woods?

Did she know all this was coming? If so, did her lessons prepare me for this, too?

Every night, I hear stories about the Aesir and Vanir gods, the Jotünn giants, and the poor mortals. They get caught in the middle of everything! Last night I heard about Yggdrasil. It's a big tree, and everything sits on its branches . . . or something like that.

My favorite stories are about the great animals like Sköll and Hati the wolves, or the giant snake Jörmungandr. I think about them out there, so big and powerful. So many things out there! I want to see a giant!

I hope I'll see it all someday. Except maybe I'll skip the gods—Odin, Thor, those guys. It seems to me like there's something about being a god that makes you crazy and fight all the time.

Okay, Father really works hard to take care of us. He's gone a lot, hunting.

He's an amazing hunter for sure. Our cold larder is always full of meat. And this hut he built is seriously solid. Not even gods could knock it down.

But he's been home for three days now . . . and I don't think he's said three words.

Not to me, anyway.

I'm getting stronger! Today I carried two full water buckets all the way up to Mother's garden.

I could feel Father watching me, every step.

I know I can do more stuff! If I had a good knife, I could help field dress the rabbits and quail we trap. But I know Father thinks I'm weak. It makes me mad.

I'm tired of being a sick little kid.

The runes connect all things—that's why Mother wants me to learn them.

But it's hard. I practice the runic alphabet every day, but I still make mistakes! I get mad and start coughing, so I get my pencil taken away.

We go outside to track animals—my favorite thing.

Today, Mother and I started the greatest project ever!

She wants me to help her build a brand new longbow. She says a special friend taught her how to make it, and she wants me to learn too. We're using the branch of a yew tree. It's amazingly strong!

When it's finished, we'll give it a special name.

Sometimes Father looks at me like I'm a stranger.

He frowns a little bit, and his eyes get dark. When he speaks, it's usually just *"Pass the goat butter, boy,"* or something like that. If he ever smiled and asked, *"How are you feeling today, Atreus?"* I'd have to go check his hunting pouch for spotted mushrooms.

Actually, I have seen Father smile. But only when he's sitting by the fire with Mother.

One night a few weeks ago they were discussing Leviathan's balance and heft. The axe used to be hers, but she gave it to him a while ago. Of course, Father's favorite topic of conversation is always weapons. But his eyes were so bright in the firelight, looking at her.

I could tell she means everything to him. Way more than me, that's for sure.

Tonight is the best night of my life!

After dinner, Mother told me a bunch of amazing stories about Skaði, the great giant huntress. We talked about hunting for hours.

And then came the surprise!

She pulled something wrapped in oilskin from our weapon locker and told me to unroll it. I did and there it was—she finished the longbow! It's beautiful! I helped her string it. She grabbed the bow and flexed it herself while I hooked the bowstring to each end.

I was so excited, I started to cough again. I don't cough as much as I did when I was little, plus Mother has taught me how to breathe so I calm down. She taught me how to think about the animals I love.

Anyway, we're going out to practice tomorrow, just Mother and me.

I'm so happy I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight.

I was right. I can't sleep.

I can't stop staring at my longbow! It looks like a flying bird. A hawk, maybe. When I nock an arrow, it's a hawk with a killer talon. I've decided to call it my Talon Bow.

What a day! I'm sitting on my favorite old log in Wildwoods. Mother's just down the path, refilling our water flask in the falls.

We've been on a practice hunt!

This morning, Father returned from another two-day trek just as we were heading out into the woods. He gave me a nod, and hugged Mother. But when he saw the Talon Bow, his eyes got big.

"Very nice," he said.

I handed it to him and slid an arrow out of my quiver. He notched it, pulled it to full draw, and sighted down the arrow's shaft.

"Remarkable," he said, squinting.

But he didn't shoot. He just eased the string forward and returned the arrow to me. Then he gave Mother a look. He smiled . . . I think. It's hard to tell with him.

Mother showed me how to set my feet in a direct line to the target . . . move them shoulder-width apart . . . nock the arrow and pull back with three fingers just below it . . . line up my eye behind the arrow's spine . . . slowly let out my breath . . . relax and aim . . . shoot.

After an hour, I got pretty good at hitting trees. Hitting rabbits? Not so good. Mother is amazing, though. She never misses.

I wonder how she got so good with weapons.

Why do I still get sick? I don't get it.

It makes me really mad. Like today, Father was glad to see I'm learning skills that matter to him, so he coiled thick straw into a round target so I could practice with my new bow. I wanted to impress him. My first shots were a little wild . . . I was nervous. But pretty soon I started hitting the bullseye.

As I drew another arrow, a black-tailed hare suddenly hopped out of a bush near the target! I raised quickly and swung left to aim ahead of him. But just before I released, I felt a weird pulse in my head.

It was the rabbit! I could hear it . . . like a voice, but not words.

He was really scared.

I felt bad, so I swung away . . . but the bowstring slipped from my fingers! The arrow shot straight across the yard toward Mother, who sat carving wooden utensils with her special knife. It hit the fence just above her. In that second of flight, I fell to the ground.

I wanted to bash in my own head, I felt so stupid. I could have killed the thing I loved most! I started yelling at myself.

Then my head exploded. Well, that's what it felt like, anyway.

The next thing I knew, I was lying on my bed, completely soaked in sweat. Mom was talking quietly to me, speaking in a strange language—or maybe not. It's hard to say. I was coughing and the room spun.

I sat up and yelled, *"I'm an idiot!"*

Mom put a cold cloth on my forehead. I kept coughing. It really rattled my chest, and my throat hurt. I could see Father standing behind her. He looked confused and worried. I never see him look like that.

"You're not an idiot," said Mother.

I laid back down. I don't like to cry anymore, but I couldn't help it. I cried like a little kid again. I'm tired of being a little kid. She helped me take some deep breaths. After a few minutes, I felt better.

I said, *"I almost killed you."*

Father stepped to the bedside. Now he looked kind of . . . amused. He said, *"If you think a boy's stray arrow could kill your Mother . . ."*

Mother put a hand on his arm and they exchanged a little glance.

Then she said to me: *"Anger can be dangerous, Atreus. Especially when you wield it against yourself."*

Something weird happened this morning,.

I was sitting in Mom's garden on the terrace behind the hut, studying runic charms while Father cut away some of the wild brush around the garden.

I started whispering the last rune charm I read. Suddenly I felt a warm fluid inside me, moving from my chest down my arms and legs. I saw sparkling lights!

I stood up and looked across the garden.

This is crazy, but for a second, I saw blades of grass along the perimeter fence—fifty meters away! If I'd had my Talon Bow, I could have targeted each one perfectly. Then I saw a vole eating wild alfalfa sprouts. I could feel how happy she was to be eating. But she sat up, and suddenly something dark passed over her.

Then the *"sight"* went away.

I turned to see Mother watching me. She knew something happened, I could tell.

Tonight, Mother told me the old runes are powerful if you know how to *"let them flow."* Speaking them aloud can invoke a mystic power. Many things, including past and future, can form before your eyes, she said.

When I told her about the warmth that felt like water inside me, she grabbed my hand.

"That's special, Atreus," she said.

Some days I do feel special, I guess. But lately I'm just sick all the time. Mother flicked the string on my bow, which lay next to me on the bed.

"Tell me about the vole. What did she tell you?"

I said the vole was happy to eat. But then something dark rolled over it—like a shadow, but different.

Then, for an hour or two, Mother and I talked about how things are changing in Wildwoods—how the wolf packs are getting sick, and how those strange ravens keep circling around and around in the distance.

Okay, today was a bad day. Really bad.

I don't actually want to write about it, but Mother says I have to. She says bad days are actually more important than good days. They teach you more.

She said this while wrapping cloth strips soaked in herbal liniment around a bloody slice in my arm.

So, here's what happened.

I was sitting in a tree not far from our gate when I heard a voice calling for help. I went out into Wildwoods alone, past our usual boundary. Big mistake. I got lost, but found the source of the voice—it was a doe, dying from an arrow wound. I found the hunter nearby, torn into a bunch of pieces. I almost threw up it was so disgusting.

Then I ran into what killed the guy—two Draugr! Rotting corpses, yet somehow alive and hungry for my flesh. I killed one by stabbing its head with an arrow, but the other one kept coming. I drew my bow and nailed its sword. It shattered, but a piece of the blade sliced open my arm! Then something grabbed the monster's throat and ripped it in half.

It was Father.

He carried me for a while then dumped me on the ground and told me to walk. Yeah, he was disappointed in me, but that's nothing new.

Last night was a strange night. Mother was different than usual.

Maybe it's all this hunting and training stuff. Mother's face is usually flushed and excited when she sits by the fire after dinner to tell her stories. But last night, she looked kind of pale. She felt cold, so I helped her wrap a blanket around her shoulders.

When we sit, Mom usually launches right into some insane tale about gods or beasts or whatever. But she just stared at the fire for a while. I almost asked her what she's thinking, but then I decided to try something.

I looked at her then closed my eyes. I reached out with my mind. Right away, I could feel it. She was sad! But I couldn't feel why.

She turned to me and smiled. *"Are you Odin's spy?"* she asked.

I was embarrassed. *"You felt that?"* I asked.

Her eyes were so dark, but she laughed. Then she started telling me about Ymir, the first giant. She said Ymir is the *real* Allfather, not Odin! She said Ymir popped out of a great blackness that was full of fire and ice and other crazy stuff. He's made of special life-water, or something.

Everything in the world came from him? I think that's what she said.

It didn't make sense, but I was kind of falling asleep, to tell you the truth. Mom's stories usually keep me awake . . . sometimes all night, if they're wild enough! But her voice sounded tired, and that made me tired too.

I hope she tells Ymir's story again some other time.

For the past month or so, Mother and Father have sort of switched places. It's weird!

Mother is gone for days at a time. Sometimes more than a week.

Meanwhile, Father is home. He does all the cooking. He tends Mother's garden. He doesn't tell stories like her, or . . . well, talk much at all. But he's always around the hut. He seems kind of confused by it too, but he told me once: "Never *worry about your Mother, boy.*"

But where's she going? What's she doing out there?

Chapter II

The Journey

During our long journey, Father and I explored all the reaches of Midgard, the human realm. We traveled to other realms as well: Alfheim, Helheim, Niflheim, Muspelheim—and eventually our final destination, Jötunheim. We also slipped through the Realm Between Realms a few times. It's a strange place. Very chilly.

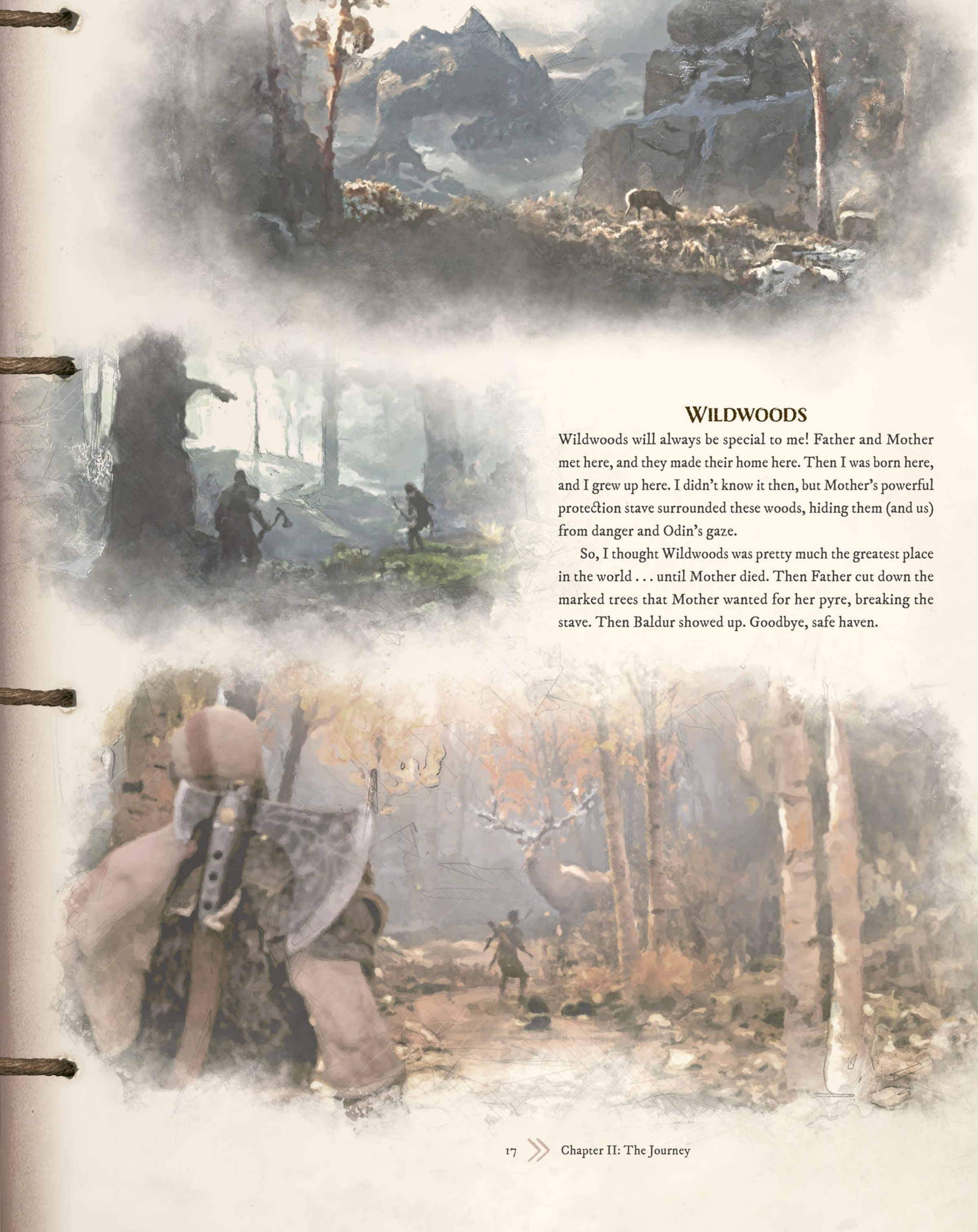
I kept notes on each region as we trekked from one to the next. I also made sketches and collected drawings and other art that I found in scrolls and books along the way. I've pulled it all together into this chapter of my journal. I asked Mimir for help too, and added his comments.

This whole world is so amazing, all sitting on the branches and roots of Yggdrasil! It's way bigger than even Mother's stories made it seem.

Too bad so much is buried under snow these days.

Midgard

This is the realm of humans. Mimir says it's at the midpoint of the great World Tree, Yggdrasil, at the center of all the realms. Compared to the other realms, Midgard is a rich, fertile land filled with a wild variety of life. Here's a list of all the places we explored.



Wildwoods

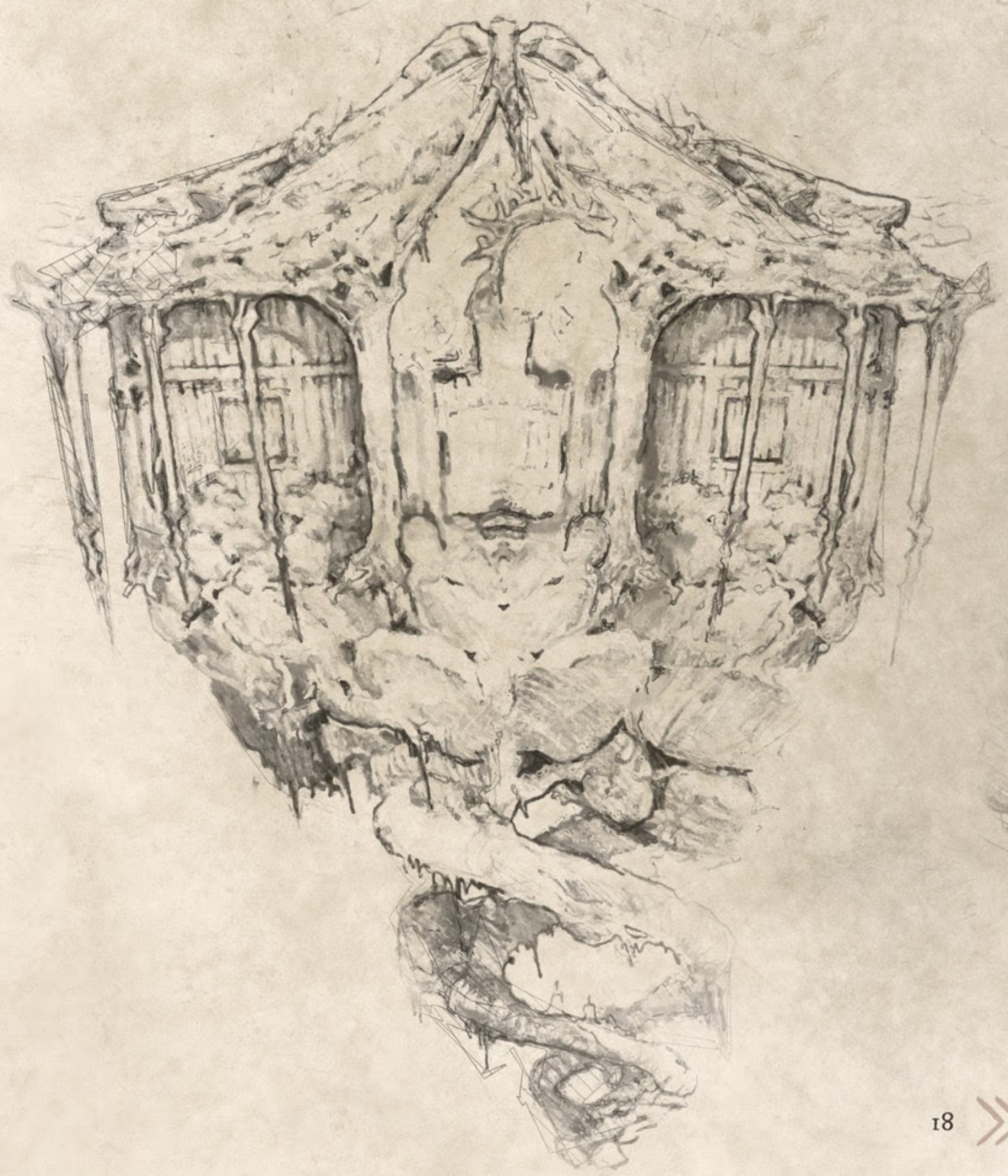
Wildwoods will always be special to me! Father and Mother met here, and they made their home here. Then I was born here, and I grew up here. I didn't know it then, but Mother's powerful protection stave surrounded these woods, hiding them (and us) from danger and Odin's gaze.

So, I thought Wildwoods was pretty much the greatest place in the world . . . until Mother died. Then Father cut down the marked trees that Mother wanted for her pyre, breaking the stave. Then Baldur showed up. Goodbye, safe haven.

The River Pass

Mimir says this trail was once well-traveled, before the Great Flood and the Desolation that followed. It was a bustling trade route with marketplaces that served giants, gods, and humans alike. It's still the fastest way from Wildwood's Edge to the Lake of Nine—but unfortunately these days it's overrun with Hel-Walkers.

After the Desolation, the few humans that still roamed the River Pass turned to cannibalism and banditry to scratch out a miserable survival. Now they're mostly gone, except for a few nasty Reaver clans. It's sad.

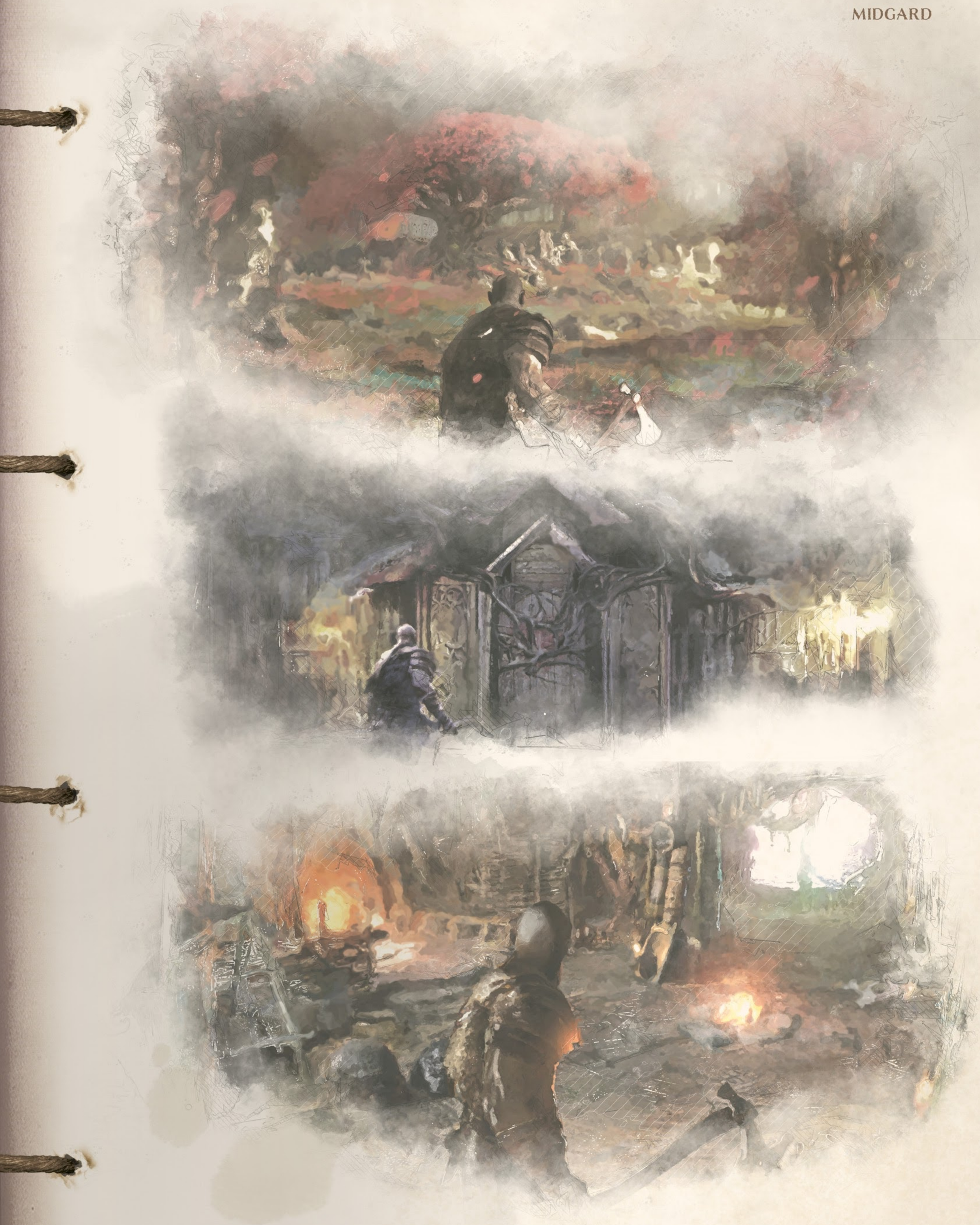


Sanctuary Grove and Witch's Cave

Hidden deep in the River Pass is Freya's Sanctuary Grove. She made her home here after Odin's curse stole her warrior spirit and trapped her in Midgard. It's amazing and magical—you can really feel it. And Freya's garden is even more beautiful than Mother's!

There's also a huge dark cave underneath Freya's house, filled with wild stuff. We found a lot of treasure down there, and Revenants too! I think they hang out there because Freya calls herself the *"Witch of the Woods,"* so they figure she's one of them. But Freya is the opposite of these angry old seiðr hags. They're so ugly and hostile.

Although . . . I guess Freya's pretty angry now too. At us.



Lake of Nine

Mimir says that before the Great Flood and Desolation, the Lake of Nine teemed with traders and adventurers. Many commercial ports dotted its shores. In the lake's center sat Týr's Temple, a symbol of hope and peace.

Sadly, those days are long gone. Since Jörmungandr appeared and the great flood followed, the Lake has been haunted by spirits with unfinished business who can't seem to escape Midgard. Father and I tried to help of few of these poor souls . . . but you can't always trust them.

Týr's Temple

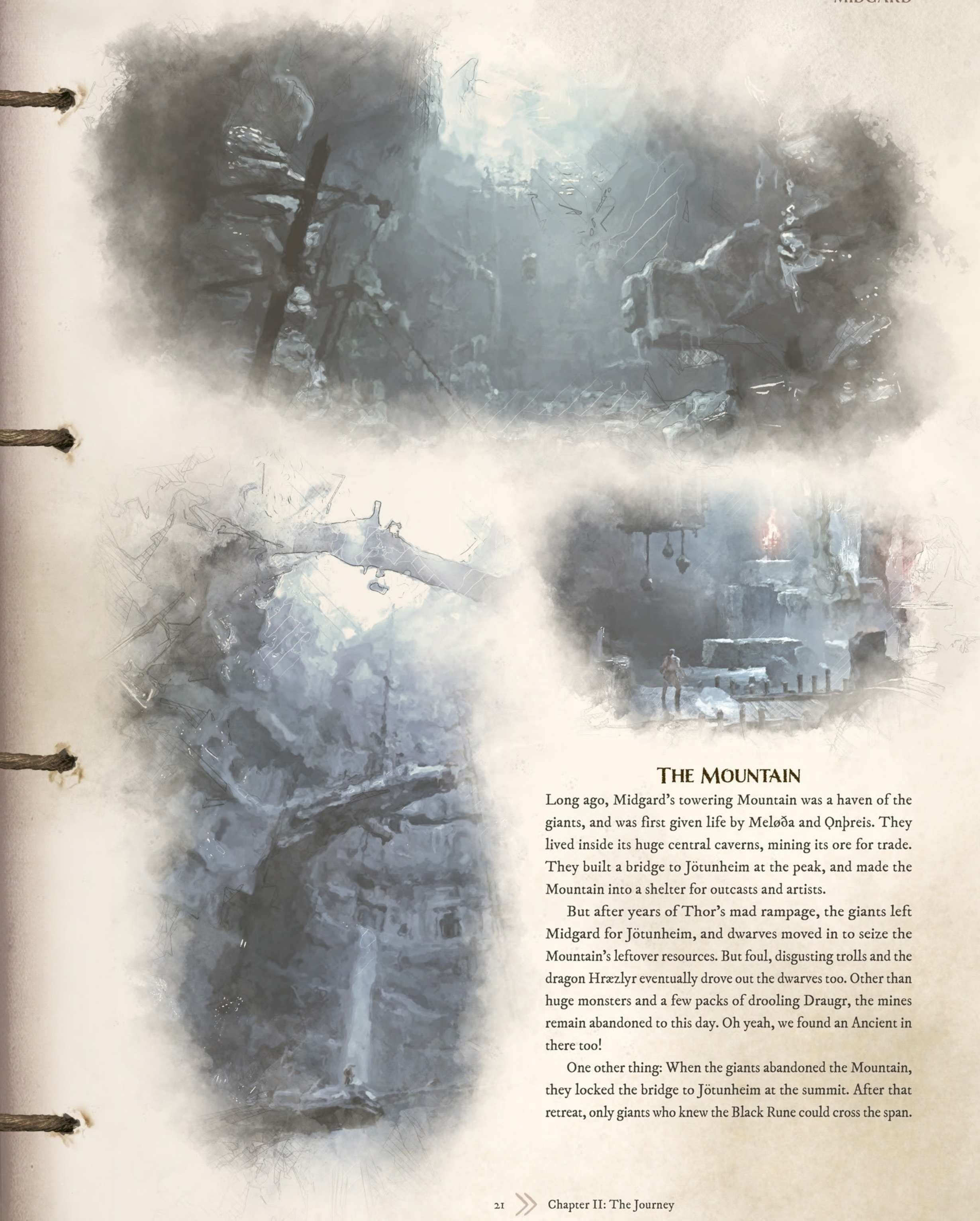
The great god Týr built his incredible temple right smack in the middle of the Lake of Nine. Freya told us that its construction was the last great act of cooperation between the races of the Nine Realms. Gods, giants, elves, dwarves, and men worked together to build the main temple, and then erected the eight travel towers in a circle around the lakeshore—one for each realm beyond Midgard.

As the main hub for realm travel, the temple was symbolic of the peaceful world Týr always tried to create. But after Odin betrayed Týr, the temple was abandoned. When the Desolation came, the building was submerged under the Lake's rising waters.

Little did old Odin know that the secret he'd sought for so long—a path to Jötunheim—was hidden in one of the temple's drowned halls. Thanks to Mimir's special eye, we found it!

Foothills

According to Mimir, the rugged Foothills—now home only to smelly, snarling monsters and corrupted seiðr magicks—once served as a staging ground for a bustling mining operation inside the Mountain. The hills were also a base camp area for anyone who wanted to summit the Mountain's peak—a place said to harbor powerful secrets. Great lifts were built to ease the summiting journey, whether you took a route inside or outside the Mountain—but most of the machinery has fallen into disrepair since the Desolation.



The Mountain

Long ago, Midgard's towering Mountain was a haven of the giants, and was first given life by Meløða and Qnþreis. They lived inside its huge central caverns, mining its ore for trade. They built a bridge to Jötunheim at the peak, and made the Mountain into a shelter for outcasts and artists.

But after years of Thor's mad rampage, the giants left Midgard for Jötunheim, and dwarves moved in to seize the Mountain's leftover resources. But foul, disgusting trolls and the dragon Hræzlyr eventually drove out the dwarves too. Other than huge monsters and a few packs of drooling Draugr, the mines remain abandoned to this day. Oh yeah, we found an Ancient in there too!

One other thing: When the giants abandoned the Mountain, they locked the bridge to Jötunheim at the summit. After that retreat, only giants who knew the Black Rune could cross the span.

Njördholm / Thamur's Corpse

Njördholm was a busy port town famous for its devotion to the Vanir god for whom it was named. Mimir told me the town's tragic history: A fun-loving god named Njörd enjoyed dabbling in time-altering magicks, and he often calmed the wind and seas for local fishermen. He loved to visit Njördholm to feast and drink in the great banquet hall with his worshipers there.

But the poor township met an unfortunate end when it became the final resting place of the giant stonemason, Thamur. When Thor impaled Thamur's thick skull with the giant's massive chisel, the mason's mountainous body fell right on Njördholm, crushing buildings and freezing the surrounding area with his dying breath.

It's kind of creepy and sad to see poor Thamur still laying there on top of Njördholm today. The lands around his icy corpse are still frozen too. No people are left—just Wulvers, Ogres, and a lot of other monsters.

Volunder Mines

We checked out Völunder Mines as a favor for Brok. Once mined heavily by dwarves from Svartalfheim, these tunnels were full of precious metals and other resources. Unfortunately for the miners, Brok's friend Andvari—a famous dwarven alchemist—took a particular interest in Völunder. Brok told us, *"Feller was always tamperin' with souls, and dark rituals, and matters of the night, see?"*

Here's what happened: Andvari tried to ease the miners' labors by removing the souls of Ancients to create a tireless, obedient workforce. He distributed some of these slave-golems to his brother Mótsognir at Konùnsgard, and to Surtr in Muspelheim. This didn't turn out well.

As Mimir puts it, *"The soulless Ancients suddenly became creatures of immolating destruction—Soul Eaters, incinerating the souls of the poor dwarf miners and eventually turning on Andvari himself."* Andvari managed to use magic to lock his own soul safely inside a ring, which we found in Volunder. It's so weird—I can talk to Andvari now, even though he no longer has a body!

Landsuther Mines

As a follow-up favor for Brok, we went down into another network of dwarven mines looking for Andvari's special blacksmith hammer. The Landsuther site is where Andvari had his lab, and its tunnels were home to another community of miners who were wiped out by his soulless creations. After the massacre, a colony of Dark Elves moved in.

We found out that the Soul Eater in Landsuther was eventually killed by one of Odin's powerful Travelers searching for clues about Jötunheim. Father and I had quite a battle with him. The Dark Elves were no picnic either. But we won, as always, and found Andvari's hammer for Brok.

Fáfnir's Storeroom

The dwarf Fáfnir was an avid collector of treasures, relics and magical artifacts. Mimir called him *"a greedy little bugger . . . a constant source of annoyance amongst Aesir and Vanir alike."* He stashed all his stolen loot in a special storeroom in Midgard. Eventually, Fáfnir got turned into a dragon by a magical Vanir mirror he pilfered (serves him right), and then got chained up by his own brother.

Father and I got the storeroom's entry stone from Sindri, who sent us off with a warning that *"all manner of nastiness has taken up residence there."* Boy, was he right! After Fáfnir's unfortunate transformation, Reavers of the Hrælza Farmaðr clan looted his storeroom . . . and then they in turn got chased out by Draugr and other monsters.

We couldn't find the special whetstone that Sindri wanted. We had to go one more place to find that prize.

Northri Stronghold

Sindri sent us to this fortress to track down the Reavers who snagged the whetstone he wanted from Fáfnir's storeroom. Mimir explained that this nasty Reaver clan, called the Hrælza Farmaðr, had a tradition of betrayal—sons killing fathers, mostly. That made me sick.

Sure enough, their leader Vandrid had murdered his dad (whose spirit we met in Fáfnir's storeroom) to gain command of the clan. But scummy Vandrid wasn't ready for leadership, so his Hrælza Farmaðr mates murdered him too, pretty gruesomely. Too bad. Like Mimir says, *"Betrayal begets betrayal."*

Veithurgard

Once a land of fertile farmlands and proud hunters, Veithurgard is now just a bunch of sad ruins surrounding a big monster-infested castle. This was the first kingdom of the powerful dwarf leader Mótsognir, brother of both Andvari and Fáfnir. All three had fled Niflheim when their father Ivaldi made a stand against Odin that led to disaster (you can read about Ivaldi and Niflheim later in this chapter).

In its early days, Veithurgard was a prosperous, thriving place. But Mótsognir was racked with visions of Aesir revenge for his father's actions. As a result, he got obsessed with recreating a legendary dwarven armor called Dvegræðikr. He was convinced it could protect him from Odin's retribution.

Seeking the armor's mystic components, the king sent hunters out to collect deadly beasts and dragons. But with his men dying in scores on each hunt, Veithurgard's defenses weakened, and it was soon overrun by angry monsters. Mótsognir and his surviving subjects fled to the stronghold of Konùnsgard.

Konùnsgard

This rundown, spooky castle was Mótsognir's last stronghold, and its story is one of most terrible I've ever heard. The crazy, paranoid Dwarven King moved here after the fall of Veithurgard, his first kingdom. Upon finishing Konùnsgard's construction, Mótsognir invited his subjects into his throne room to *"celebrate."* But, still consumed with finding the components of the legendary Dvegræðikr armor, he slaughtered them all . . . to harvest their screams! The dead soon rose as Hel-Walkers, killing their mad king. Good riddance, as I see it.

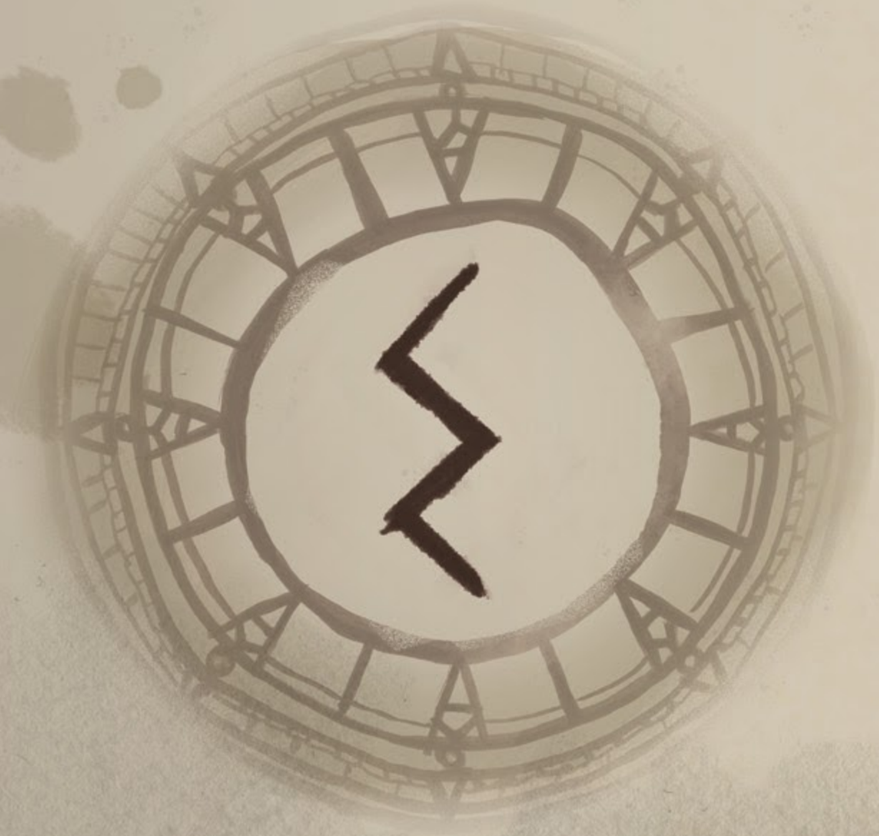
The Council of Valkyries

The secret council chamber of the Valkyries of Valhalla—the *Rocstóll aff Valkyrs*—gave me chills the first time I saw it. We found its entrance just left of the two big oarsmen statues on the Lake of Nine shore. It feels special . . . kind of like a holy place.

On our journey, after we freed each Valkyrie from their corrupted physical form—I guess we sort of *"killed"* them, but in a good way—we put their helmets on the thrones inside the council chamber. Every time we placed a new helmet, Mimir filled us in on that Valkyrie's history. Each one is pretty impressive.

Then, after we finally liberated their leader, Sigrun, she told us that *Freya* is the real Valkyrie Queen! That blew my mind.

The Other Realms



Alfheim

The Elven realm is home to the Light of Alfheim, the Lake of Souls, and a never-ending war between the Light and Dark Elves. It's sad, because Alfheim is one of the most amazing and beautiful places I've ever seen. Mimir says the two elf factions have been fighting to control the Light of Alfheim for a long time. Both sides believe they're its rightful keepers. Why can't they just share it?

One other interesting note: Mimir says that one of the few gods welcome in Alfheim was Freya's brother Freyr, who directed construction of the Ringed Temple built around the Light of Alfheim. He was regarded as a lord by the elves of *both* sides! I wish Freya could figure out how to stop the fighting.

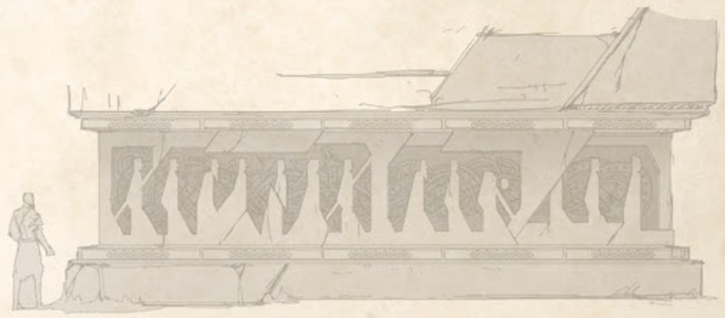
HELHEIM

Bitterly cold and desolate, Helheim is the land of dead people who didn't do anything glorious in life . . . like, say, die in combat. If your death is ordinary or shameful, you're sent to this forsaken place instead of being escorted by Valkyries to the eternal banquet hall of Valhalla.

Something about that doesn't seem right to me, but I guess that's just the way it goes . . .

The bridge into the depths of Helheim is guarded by Máttugr Helson, a powerful Ice Troll born in Hel and kept there as its guardian. Father had to cut out Máttugr's heart to save my life when I got sick.

Anyway, after Odin betrayed Freya and imprisoned the Valkyries, they couldn't do their winnowing job and Helheim soon became chock-full of souls. So, whoever runs Hel decided to shut its gates, forcing the dead to return to their corpses in the Nine Realms and rise up again as angry blue entities called Hel-Walkers.



JÖTUNHEIM

This is the giants' realm—the homeland of the Jötnar, my ancestors! Founded by Bergelmir the Beloved, Jötunheim emerged from the spilling of Ymir's lifeblood, the creation event of the Nine Realms. Sure, it sounds gross, but it produced a great race: masons and builders, prophets and seers, great warriors like Laufey the Just—who were nonetheless peaceful people and, yeah, also great mothers.

But it wasn't easy for Jötunheim, not ever. Many died in the great war between the Aesir and Vanir, caught in the middle of a conflict they had no real stake in. Even more were brutally murdered during Thor's genocidal campaign with Mjölnir, his giantkiller hammer. As a result, the weary Jötnar retreated to Jötunheim. With Týr's help, they destroyed or hid all routes to their home, including the Jötunheim travel towers in all the other realms.

When Father and I finally reached Jötunheim's great mountaintop halls covered with prophetic murals, we found a final plea by the giants for gods to *"grow good."* We released Mother's ashes, per her last wishes, and we saw what's become of my legendary race—and how it needs a restart.

Muspelheim

As home to the fire giants and their great leader Surtr, the Realm of Primordial Fire features nothing but flame and ashes. Freya once told me it was *"no place for children, even brave ones."* Mimir says Muspelheim is not only the greatest fire of all . . . it is actually the very *source* of fire itself, of the sun and stars, if legend is to be believed.

The lore says that Surtr trains in Muspelheim daily, never sleeping, preparing for the coming battles of Ragnarök. But I never saw him—or *any* fire giants—on our visits (according to prophecy, we won't see them until Ragnarök). However, we *did* go through Surtr's Gauntlet, a series of ridiculously hard training challenges marked by giant swords. Surtr supposedly created it to keep in fighting shape for Ragnarök. I have to say, we got pretty good at them . . . after a few tries.

Niflheim

Niflheim is a desolate realm of mist, snow, ice, and wind. But the dwarven inventor Ivaldi—one of the smartest dwarves ever, according Sindri—found a way to harness the realm's wild power. Then he channeled it into amazing, powerful contraptions that shocked all the races! In fact, Sindri says that the stuff Ivaldi built in his workshop challenged the gods themselves.

Of course, Odin didn't take kindly to any threat to Aesir superiority, so he cast a curse on Ivaldi's greatest raw material: the wild mist itself. Now the Cursed Mists of Niflheim are a deadly poison to gods and dwarves alike, causing a slow, agonizing death to anybody who lingers—an eternal reminder of Ivaldi's pride, as Odin sees it. Today, the mist is known as Ivaldi's Curse! It killed Ivaldi and forced his people to flee Niflheim forever.

Realms We Didn't Visit

We never made it to Vanaheim, Svartalfheim, or Asgard. I don't think I ever *want* to visit Asgard, to tell you the truth. But maybe I'll visit the home of the Vanir gods someday. I wish I could take Freya there. She really misses her homeland. I'd really love to see the dwarven realm too, maybe with Brok and Sindri.

Asgard

Yes, the realm of the stupid Aesir gods. Mimir says it's actually a beautiful place—a golden world, full of feasting and fighting, ruled by Odin, the so-called AllFather. Years ago, the one-eyed god sealed off access to Asgard in yet another desperate attempt to stave off Ragnarok. Maybe I'm crazy too, but I might welcome the apocalypse if it means I get to watch Odin and Thor meet their doom.

Vanaheim

The Vanir gods (who practice the Old Magic) live here. I got a glimpse of Vanaheim countryside once through Freya's Bifröst window—it looked so green and peaceful. Mimir calls it *"a realm of harmony"* and says that Freya was a great leader of her people. But Odin has sealed off Vanaheim too. I hope I get to see it someday.

Svartalfheim

Another sealed realm, thanks to Odin. His spells isolate Svartalheim to prevent any alliance between the dwarves and the Vanir. Little is known about the land of the dwarves, as its folk are unusually secretive. Some say it's underground—a dark, smoky place, lit only by the fires in the forges of the dwarven blacksmiths who toil there.

Chapter III

Fimbulwinter

This part of my journal includes all the pages I've written since Father and I completed our journey and returned from Jötunheim. After we released Mother into the winds of her homeland, we found Mimir waiting for us on the floor of the Realm Travel Room.

It seemed like we were in Jötunheim only minutes.

Father and I explored the great Hall of the Giants and saw the amazing mural prophecy of our journey. Then we scattered Mother's ashes and headed back across the bridge. That's it! That's all we did.

But Mimir, who we left in Týr's Temple to await our return, told us that a *lot* more time passed than we realized. The snow that began falling when Father killed Baldur was now deep, and was still falling everywhere. Mimir said it had become the stuff of omens.

He thinks this is Fimbulwinter.

Fimbulwinter! The three-year freeze that comes just before Ragnarök. As Mimir put it, *"Snow, lots more snow, and then the end of the bloody world, in that approximate order."* Brok and Sindri agree. Brok is sure this is the end times: *"The winter to end all winters,"* he says.

But according to Jötnar prophecies of Ragnarök, Fimbulwinter shouldn't be here for several hundred years. Something's out of whack. Mimir thinks maybe Baldur's death did something weird to trigger the final cycle.

So maybe it's our fault? Father did not like hearing that.

Whatever's happening, Wildwoods sure looks different now.

The drifts are so deep in some places, it's like climbing the final ridge to Mountain's Summit. Hunting is harder. I remember the lore marker we found in Jötunheim that read: *"We foresee Midgard's fate—overrun, a second Hel."* That's exactly what it's like! Hel-Walkers are everywhere.

Things *feel* different, too. The animals are very agitated. When we're in the forest, I feel their fear: *Something is coming!* Something big and dark, like a monstrous storm—only worse.

After spending nearly a week clearing out hostiles from Wildwoods, Father and I decided today to push into River Pass.

Our plan is to scout Midgard on foot, and so we're not using Mystic Gateways to bypass areas. We took Mimir, as usual. As much as his chatter annoys Father, his advice always comes in handy.

The route took us back to the old Jötnar settlement just beyond Wildwoods' Edge. The ruins were so much colder and quieter this time. No Draugr at all, just a few Hel-Reavers stumbling around. It made me kind of depressed to think that this was once a busy giant marketplace . . . filled with all races and tribes, trading goods and stories.

On the way through, we stopped in the big hall to check out the Jötnar shrine to Hrungnir.

Looking at it again, knowing the whole story, I felt bad. Hrungnir was a big stone-headed simpleton . . . no threat to anybody, really. But Thor walked in and hammered his head without a second thought. Just because he was a giant!

Staring at the triptych, Father was even quieter than usual. Even Mimir was silent.

Father and I don't ever talk about Thor. But I think it's possible Father hates him as much as I do.

The River Basin waters are frozen solid!

Wow, it's so cold I almost wish the Lava Troll was still hanging around here. Brenna Dauði's lava-stomp attacks might warm things up.

We decided to make camp in the cave passage. It's still cold but at least it cuts off the wind.

I wonder if I'll ever see the sun again?

Today, Father surprised me. I think he wants to see Freya again!

We broke camp and headed north—the abandoned hunting village is still abandoned, the foggy gulch is still foggy. But when we reached Freya's Sanctuary Grove, the wall of vines was closed up tight. Father tried a few chops with Leviathan, but the blade just bounced off.

His eyes got narrow. I know that look (As Mimir says, *"Just shut up and follow it, lad."*). He stomped back through River Pass and down to the Lake of Nine, a long hike. Then we paddled up the icy inlet into Freya's Cave, rode the lift, and approached her house. The door was magically sealed, tighter than a Nornir chest. Nobody answered our knocks.

Mimir said, *"She's probably in there planning your demise, brother."*

Look, I know Odin tricked Freya. He twisted the Vanir magic she taught him, using it to strip her of her ability to fight and trap her in Midgard.

But wow . . . Freya's magic is still so powerful.

We're back home, and now I can't stop thinking about Freya: How is she? What's she doing?

I worry about her. Last time we saw her, she was carrying off her son's body. She threatened to *"rain every agony, every violation imaginable"* upon us! Later, Mimir explained that people feel a special, burning hate for anybody who kills their kid. But he also said if we give her time, maybe she'll come around. Maybe she'll forgive us.

I really hope so. Freya reminds me of Mother. She's kind, but you don't want to mess with her. I bet she's a fearsome warrior too, when she's not held back by Odin's spell.

Which reminds me: Back on that day when Father and I returned from Jötunheim, Mimir told us that Freya visited him while we were gone. He said she asked about Odin and her Valkyrie wings.

"Seems she's rather bent on reclaiming her warrior spirit," Mimir said. *"I'm afraid the cycle of vengeance may not be so easily broken."*

Vengeance? We only wanted to save her life!

Father refuses to talk about any of it, as usual. But I know he's upset about how it ended. I could feel his special connection with Freya. Maybe it's something only us gods can understand.

Would she really try to kill us?

Today, we trekked overland into the Foothills behind Vanaheim Tower.

We found Sindri loading smithy tools onto a cart. He was breaking down his workshop near the Sky Mover, the awesome tram that runs up to Mountain's Base. Sindri said that he and Brok decided to consolidate all their blacksmith stuff at a cave by the lake.

"Far too cold up here," he said. *"And these new monsters are very . . . unsanitary."*

Sindri has a problem with stuff that isn't clean. *"I've never met a sanitary monster, Sindri,"* I said.

"Well, if you're headed to the Mountain, good luck," he said. *"It's a terrible slog, very nasty."* He ducked behind his cart . . . and suddenly he was standing behind me—one of his favorite tricks. *"Too bad you gods can't just slip into the Realm Between Realms at will, like us little people."*

He was joking because of some mean things I said to him once.

"Very funny, dwarf," growled Father. *"Is the travel that bad?"*

"Oh yes," said Sindri. *"Snow is thigh-deep up there. And I've seen such strange beasts."*

We all looked up at the Mountain. It was just a pale gray silhouette through the falling snow. Freezing winds howled down the pass and cut right through my tunic. I'm stronger than I was a year ago, but this cold is ridiculous.

Thank god we lined my boots with Wulver fur, or I'd be missing a few toes by now.

Well, at least my charcoal pencil works, even in the worst cold.

After we said goodbye to Sindri, we hiked through the Foothills. The whole way, Father never said a word. After four hard hours, we stopped to build a campfire in the courtyard outside the big red gate at Mountain's Base.

Right now, Father's down in the ravines, chopping up more firewood. I'm sitting here alone, writing notes.

I guess it's like Mother used to say: *Old habits die hard*. Some things have changed between us—they're better, for sure. I mean, if there's one thing Father appreciates, it's a reliable fighting partner. I'm still learning, but I never miss my shot when it counts.

It's crazy. We always win, every fight. And why not, right? We're gods! Even when we get ambushed or outnumbered, we win. We're a great team.

But I can tell . . . Father has something on his mind. He's not himself.

We're back home, finally.

I admit it — I'm totally wiped out. Father let me build the fire while he goes down to the river to field dress a deer we killed in Wildwoods near the hut. Father is moving slow too. But he isn't tired so much as he's *"dispirited."* That's Mimir's word for it, anyway.

I poked at the fire and asked why. As usual, I had no idea.

"Your Father is a warrior, lad," Mimir told me. *"Frankly, when enraged, Kratos is the most frightening killer I've ever seen—and that includes some pretty bloodthirsty Aesir brutes, believe me."* His eyes glowed a bit as he spoke. *"He fears nothing, not even death. He'll fight anybody or anything, be it god or dragon or the slavering legions of Hel."*

I said, *"So what's bothering him?"*

"This Fimbulwinter business is different," said Mimir. *"It's out of his control."*

"You mean . . . it's something he can't fight," I said.

"Exactly," said Mimir. *"You can't fight fate, lad. Odin has tried for hundreds of years, with absolutely nothing to show for his efforts. Ragnarök is coming! It can't be stopped—not by Mjölnir nor Leviathan nor the mightiest armies of Asgard and Vanaheim combined."*

I was quiet for a while, thinking about this.

Then . . . I don't know why . . . I asked Mimir something I've been wondering for months, ever since I had a dream that felt real, like something from the future: *"Do you think Father could kill Thor?"*

"That, lad, I do not know," he replied.

I killed a raven today. Another spy? Probably.

Most bird-thoughts are easy to hear. Their feelings are as clear as their beautiful birdsongs. But this one was dead silent inside. I couldn't hear anything! Odin's spell put some kind of shroud on it.

When we travel, we keep a sharp eye out for Odin's ravens or other signs of Aesir incursion.

I wonder when we'll fight another Asgardian god. I can't wait, honestly.

Last week, we decided to spend some time at home, resting up.

Of course Father never *really* rests, so we trained too. He's using his Blades of Chaos more often. With all these Hel-Walkers crawling out of the ground—Brok calls them

"the scrote-froze vanguard of Helheim"—we're using more fire-based runic attacks too.

But this also gives me a chance to reorganize my journal and all the stuff we found.

And boy, there's a *ton* of stuff. On our journey, I wrote down every story and rune marker message, collected all the scrolls we found, and took notes on everything else. I drew pictures of every person and beast that we met; I sketched every Jötnar shrine and many of the places we visited too. I'm putting all the old tales into a Lore chapter, and listing all our enemies in a Bestiary.

Reading the old runes makes my head explode . . . like, in a good way. I can't believe how much I'm learning.

Something really strange happened this morning.

Father was down by the river again, butchering more game for storage in the cold larder. Inside the hut, Mimir was helping me remember details of a Jötnar tale when we heard weird whining outside. I grabbed my Talon Bow and cracked open the door for a peek.

Dark figures skulked near the yard's open gate. Wolves!

"Be careful, lad," whispered Mimir from the cask where his head always sits.

I drew a Shock Arrow from my quiver. I never like killing wolves. But this past year the Wildwoods packs have all gone rabid or crazed with poison. Plus, now the brutal winter is starving them too! Prey is scarce. So I figure zapping them just ends their misery.

I stepped out into the yard and drew my bowstring.

A full pack of huge wolves was pacing near the gate. I counted six, so I got ready to nock arrows fast. They spread out in a half circle when they saw me. They stared at me with yellow eyes, and then after a few seconds . . . they all started howling at the sky!

Something buzzed in my head. It was weird . . . It felt like something I knew. I lowered my bow.

They just howled for a minute until Father appeared, running up the river path with Leviathan raised. The wolves sprinted off into the forest.

Father approached me. *"Atreus, are you alright?"* He looked at me strangely.

"I'm fine," I said.

"Did they attack you?" he asked.

I almost laughed. For some reason, the idea seemed funny. I have no idea why.

"No," I said. *"They just howled."*

As Father hustled back to the river to retrieve the venison, I went into the house. I sat by Mimir and told him what happened. Something about it was familiar.

Speaking of howling in the woods . . .

What's out there? It seems we hear new creatures almost every day. Strange shapes lurk in the foggy ravines near the river where you can't see them clearly. Others come out only at night. I want to track them, but Father says it would be foolish to face new foes in the darkness. Naturally, his first thought is how to fight things.

But in this case he's probably right. I can sense their aggression—they're really mad! But they slip away whenever we approach.

What's up with that? Why do they avoid us?

I try to write in this journal every day or two.

But a week ago, I set it down on my bed when we headed out for a quick day trip to Veithurgard Pass. Our plan was to explore, collect resources, bag some game, then get home by dusk. I figured I'd log an entry when we got back.

That afternoon we were tracking hoofprints near the beach when a huge blizzard blew in from nowhere. In just seconds it was total whiteout, like a snow cyclone. It seemed magical—colder than anything I've ever felt, even in Helheim. Mimir said the wind was *"Hel's rancid breath."*

We tried to push the boat out to hurry home, but gave up and headed east to Veithurgard Castle. Screaming winds pushed snow drifts right up the entry stairs! We staggered into the hall where the Jötnar shrine to Skaði, the great huntress, sits.

We camped in that hall for six days, waiting for the stupid blizzard to stop.

When the winds finally died, we went outside. I couldn't believe it! Everything was either buried in white or coated in ice. It was beautiful and scary at the same time. But the really crazy thing was the Veithurgard Pass waterway. It was frozen solid! Instead of paddling, we dragged the boat up the passage to where we saw the craziest thing of all.

The Lake of Nine was now filled with big chunks of floating ice!

On these cold nights I find myself thinking about Mother more and more . . .

. . . But not about *"Faye,"* the mom I knew. I don't need to think about that person too much because she's a part of me. These Fimbulwinter nights I think about who mom was *before* me: *"Laufey the Just."*

I can't believe Father didn't even know she was a giant!

I've heard all the stories from Brok and Sindri, who actually knew her then. I've seen the lore markers that refer to the *"Jötnar guardian"*—the great giantess of Midgard. I've also heard the Aesir rumors from Mimir. I love it that all those stupid Aesir were so afraid of her.

I like to picture her swinging Leviathan, chasing them back to Asgard.

But even though *"Laufey"* was a fearsome warrior like Father, she was different. For example: I remember, early in our journey, Father's lesson about killing enemies. We were just leaving Wildwoods, and he told me:

"Close your heart to their desperation. Close your heart to their suffering. Do not allow yourself to feel for them. They will not feel for you."

And he said it again in the Jötnar ruins when I first had to kill a human attacker: *"Close your heart to it."*

But Mother had an open heart! She taught me to open mine too, to listen carefully to all things, *especially* their feelings. Whenever we met an animal in the woods, she'd ask: *What does it feel?* Like Brok's pack animal on the bridge that time—I felt its fear of the monster hiding in the trees up ahead.

When Father and I first approached the old temple just down the path from here, I told him how Mother warned me never to go inside it.

He just grunted and said, *"We go where we please, boy. No excuses."*

No excuses? Why, because we're gods? Was that a good lesson? I'm not sure.

I also picture Mother laying out our journey's path, marking the way to Jötunheim for Father and me.

She saw our destiny so clearly. Her power of prophecy must have been special . . . maybe even as good as Gróa the Knowledge Keeper herself.

When I found Mother's yellow handprint on the ledge just outside the great mountaintop hall in Jötunheim, I felt a chill—the good kind. I told Father she must have seen every step we took before we took it.

In a way, she was always with us, watching over us. Leading us home.

The storms are getting worse.

It's getting colder. I'm not sleeping very well. I have weird dreams. Then I wake up with a bunch of questions that not even Mimir can answer.

I keep dreaming about the Light of Alfheim. I wish Father would tell me more about what he saw inside. He says he felt only moments pass. He also says Mother wasn't in there. But, the way he says it . . . I'm not sure I believe him.

Standing outside the Light, I felt her.

I also dream about killing Modi.

I hated him so much it made me sick! But now, in my dreams, I feel sick about it in a different way. During the journey, Father and I were paddling up toward Freya's Cave one time. He was telling one of his lame stories about a scorpion who stung a frog that was carrying him across a river, so they both sank and died.

His point was, it's the scorpion's nature to do harm, even if he hurts himself too. I told Father that's what mom used to say about gods.

He looked funny, and said, *"Your mother always spoke the truth."*

Of course, I didn't know I was a god then. But Mother always knew! I'm sure she hoped I would grow up to be a good god, like Týr. But can I? After we killed Baldur, Freya told Father he was just an animal, passing on his cruelty and rage. She said, *"You will never change."*

Is that true?

Look, I know I haven't been the greatest god so far. After we got flung into Helheim, Father was really mad at me. He said, *"You will honor your mother and abandon this path you have chosen. It is not too late!"* Then after we killed Baldur, he took me by the shoulders and said, *"We will be the gods we choose to be, not those who have been. We must be better."*

But can we? Is it possible? Or are we just scorpions too?

Why did Mother want my birthname to be Loki?

I love my given name, especially after hearing father tell the story of my namesake, Atreus of Sparta, his great friend . . . the guy who saw goodness and humanity even in grim trained killers like his fellow Spartan soldiers.

But seeing my name as *"Loki"* on the wall mural in Jötunheim makes me wonder.

It isn't a Jötun name—not like I've heard before, anyway. I guess that makes sense, since my blood is a crazy mix of god, giant, and mortal.

So, what does it mean? Mom must have had a reason. I mean, she *always* had a reason. She saw my path.

It must mean something.

This morning I woke with a jolt, like somebody jabbed me with a Shock Arrow.

I turned to Mimir. He was reading a book, sleepless as always. He looked at me and said, *"Things have taken a turn, I fear."*

As I sat up, I could feel it too. Something different is happening, for sure. It isn't just a change in the weather. Father was already on his feet, unwrapping his Blades. For a guy who ignores feelings, he sure has a keen sense about threat and danger.

Outside, I can feel Wildwoods getting ready. All of Midgard, probably.

Yeah, things have changed.

The woods are afraid. I can feel it . . . it's like a dark mist drifting through the trees. The Lake of Nine is solid ice now, covered thick in snow. We no longer have access to the Realm Travel Room in Týr's Temple. Odin's locked out travel to all the other realms . . . but thanks to Sindri, at least the doors that help us get around Midgard quickly still work.

I don't want to give away their secrets here, in case somebody with bad intentions (and Aesir blood) ever gets ahold of this journal.

Let's just say dwarves are tricky folk.

Hel-Walkers are on the move, too. They seem more organized now, but once we engage they fight a bit then fall back. I think they're waiting for something—an order, a sign, who knows. Reinforcements, maybe. It's very odd. Father is frustrated. So am I!

Every day gets crazier. More stuff happens. It's harder to keep my writing up to date.

I may have to set this journal aside soon.

Mother, what's our path now?

I feel lost here, in my own world. What are we facing? Is this Fimbulwinter inside or outside the visions of Jötnar prophecy? We need your guidance.

I'd give anything to see mom's yellow handprint again.

Chapter IV

NORSE LORE

Every night, Mother and I would sit on low stools by the fire. She'd sort the fresh-picked herbs, or braid her hair, or sometimes just stare at the flames. As she did, she'd tell me amazing stories about our northern realms. It was my favorite part of the day.

I learned about Odin and Thor and other gods, Aesir and Vanir, all the crazy things they did, the silly feuds and battles. I learned about mortals and spirits and the lesser creatures. She'd tell me about big things that happened, and how they got started.

Mother also talked a lot about the giants, and now I know why. She was Laufey the Just, the Jötun guardian of Midgard! She wanted me to *"see the line of my people back to the beginning,"* like the prayer says . . . the ones who came before.

I didn't know I was part giant back then. I wish I did.

Her stories were always short and simple . . . after all, I was just a little kid. But even then, I always wanted more. Later, after we met Mimir, I got my wish. These days our new friend often gives us more detail about the old histories than Father can stand. But I often see a slight smile on his face, even if he won't let Mimir see it. Father is warming up to him.

And that's not all! Sometimes we check in with Brok and Sindri to upgrade and repair our gear. I love watching them work their smithy. What a team! They're just like Father and me in battle. As the dwarves stoke the coal in their forge with the bellows, or hammer a red-hot blade on the anvil, I ask too

many questions and listen to their amazing stories. They've made the rounds of the realms, and they've seen so many things.

Father just lets them talk . . . mainly, I think, because he loves the smell of freshly tempered metal.

And so I've gathered what I've heard from all these different people and written it all down in this journal section. I figure if I pull together all the bits and pieces of everyone's stories—from Mother, Mimir, Brok, and Sindri—I can cover a lot of our land's lore. I also added notes from some of the scrolls and markers we found on our journey.

Not that Father cares, of course. He made his feelings clear about that the day we reached Mötsognir's stronghold in Konùnsgard. As Mimir told us of the dwarven king's obsessive quest for legendary armor, Father noted how a plagued land was all that remained of the foul pursuit. He said, *"This is why you do not trust legends, boy."*

When I asked Father what you can trust, he replied, *"Yourself. Your eyes. Your instincts. Blind trust in a legend is a gamble. And rarely does it pay off."* So you can see that Father doesn't think much of lore, obviously.

But I think old stories can tell you a lot about the world, if you know how to read them right.

Mimir's Story

This may sound grisly, but we're pretty lucky we found Mimir and beheaded him. Seriously, it's true. On our journey, as we boated across the Lake of Nine and up Midgard's rivers, Mimir would tell us old tales and answer all our questions about what they might mean. His guidance helped so much, and I think even Father would admit that. I know we couldn't have found Jötunheim without Mimir!

It's kind of crazy, but as Odin's special adviser, Mimir was a direct witness to events that would be told to me as bedtime stories. Even his own personal story is kind of legendary. Once I figured out how much he knew about realm history, I started writing down everything he said.

Mimir's First Job

I asked Mimir on one of our trips why he ever worked for Odin if the Allfather was so horrible. He replied, *"If you want to make your career as a counselor to kings, you can't very well rule out petty maniacs."* Turns out his first master, a faerie king, was terrible too—Mimir calls him a *"cruel piece of work."* Still, he taught Mimir the power of wit, which he says served him well with kings and gods alike.

"I couldn't have been much older than you when I started as an errand boy and unofficial jester," he told me. *"By night, my mates and I had the run of the forest. Goodfellows, they called us, knavish sprites to the last. We'd get up to all manner of mischief, making fools of the local mortals . . . and as long as our lord was kept amused, we were spared the consequences."*

But one day the faerie king grew tired of the Goodfellows' antics, so Mimir moved on, heading north. By the time he got here, he'd already heard plenty about Odin's reputation.

"I was young enough to still be ambitious," he said. *"The Aesir gods were as powerful a force as I'd come across, but they clearly lacked for strategy, focus, and sage counsel. All this could I faithfully provide."*

And so, he said, a stranger from a far-off island found himself with Odin's ear, and was soon trusted as the god-king trusted no other. Pretty amazing!

Mimir's Well

Mimir first set out to demonstrate his worth to Odin by offering something he knew the Aesir king couldn't resist: a mystic well of knowledge. But Mimir's *"mystic well"* was actually just plain water laced with hallucinogenic mushrooms!

"Oh, he was rightly impressed!" said Mimir. *"Not sure which vision led him to try gouging out his own eyes, but he managed to pop one out before I could stop him."* That's why everyone calls Odin *"the One-Eyed King"*!

Horrified, Mimir convinced Odin that this eye sacrifice would bestow him with a higher form of sight. *"I used to think he never caught on,"* he said. *"But the day he took* my *eye, I realized he had never been fooled. Turns out he knew I'd outwitted him, so he called the lesson wisdom and hired me, to make sure I was on his side."*

For a long time, Mimir truly was on Odin's side. But he found out that Odin holds a nasty grudge.

"Lord of the Hanged"

I remember hearing Mother once refer to Odin as *"the Lord of the Hanged."* When I asked Mimir about it, he told me it refers to the time Odin spent nine days as a dead man!

"Hung himself by the neck from Yggdrasil's branches," he said. *"Put his spear through his own side, and bled down into the Well of Destiny."*

Mimir said Odin roamed the realms of the dead and tried to plunder the World Tree of its secrets . . . until Yggdrasil finally got fed up with him and sent him back to the land of the living.

"Did I not mention he was barking mad?" said Mimir. Odin is totally obsessed with drinking up all the knowledge he can find.

Mimir and Odin

Mimir served as Odin's adviser for more than a hundred years! Early on, Mimir decided that his true purpose was to gently steer the mad god-king away from his crazy obsessions. But Odin lost trust in Mimir and imprisoned him in the tree on the Mountain's summit, where we found him.

Later, after he joined us, I asked Mimir what exactly he did to get Odin so mad at him. *"Well, for a long time, my job was to enable Odin, and I was excellent at it,"* he said. *"Gradually, as I grew more to care about people, and the world, my job became to serve peace by containing him. I was protecting Odin from himself."*

So, by serving peace, Mimir believed he served Odin's interests as well, but eventually Odin saw it as disloyalty. No longer trusting Mimir's motives, but not wishing to part with his adviser's brain or tongue, Odin bound him to a tree and tortured him every day until we found him 109 years later.

See? I'm glad we came along to cut off Mimir's head. So is he!

The Vanir-Aesir War

The two northern tribes of gods, Aesir and Vanir, have been fighting for so many years that everyone calls it *"the Long War."* Mother told me how it all started. Tensions had long smoldered between the tribes—some say since time itself began—so Freyr, a beloved leader of the Vanir, traveled to Asgard at Odin's invitation. He wanted to give the Aesir a great gift to keep the peace, so he taught them how to grow crops using seiðr magic. His spells were so good the harvest could feed all of Asgard.

But Mother always said that really powerful magic always has a downside. The Aesir couldn't control the seiðr enchantment properly, and the crops became poisoned. Angry and drunk on mead, they blamed Freyr, tossed him into a pile of dead crops, and set it on fire.

The flames hurt a lot, but Freyr knew how to survive fire. He awoke hours later to find himself alone in Odin's great hall. Thinking he was dead, the cruel Aesir were probably off celebrating somewhere, so Freyr crawled from the still-burning coals and snuck out of Asgard.

When Freyr got back to Vanaheim and told his story, his fellow Vanir gods were furious. They gathered in a seaside longhouse in Nóatún and decided to seek revenge against the barbaric Aesir.

And so, the war of the gods began.

The Aesir—Odin, Thor, Hoenir, Hodr, Ve, Vili, and all the rest—fought mercilessly. They attacked with weapons and brute force, because physical combat was the only way they knew how to fight.

But the Vanir fought back with magic. Led by Freyr's sister Freya and their father Njörd, the Vanir used enchantments to repel the Asgardians again and again. Freya used her seiðr skills to confuse the Aesir warriors into attacking each other! Then Njörd summoned angry, vicious winds that whipped across the sea, blowing the Aesir boats all over the place.

Neither side could get a clear advantage, so the fighting continued for centuries! Odin gathered vast armies and marched them again and again into Vanaheim. Every time, Vanir gods casting seiðr spells would wipe out Odin's soldiers. With so much terrible damage done to both sides, the warring gods found themselves stuck in a stalemate.

LORE MARKER

The Long, Cruel War

"Here fell Nerthus of the Vanir, slain by Magni and Modi, sons of Thor. The Jötnar bear witness to the cruelty of this Long War. Neither Aesir nor Vanir may triumph, it is foreseen—but what may be left of Midgard before they lay down arms?"

Mimir's Peace Plan

When Father and I brought Mimir's severed head to Freya, she used her amazing *"witch magic"* to bring it back to life. But the first thing she did when Mimir woke up was spit in his face! Later, on one of our boat trips, I asked Mimir why she did that. His answer was so interesting that I wrote down everything he said:

"Well, she blames me in large measure for her present circumstances . . . and not totally without reason. It all goes back to the Long War between the Aesir and the Vanir. Prior to that, wars

for the Aesir were easily won—but the Vanir had proved to be their equal and exacted devastating damage. Both sides suffered tremendous losses . . . and for many of us, quite frankly, war was simply no fun anymore, but a rather senseless waste of precious life."

Mimir said he realized that the only way out was a brokered peace based on compromise, and because both sides considered him a clever negotiator, they selected him as sole arbiter. The deal he proposed was pretty crazy, I must say. Freya, high goddess of the Vanir, would marry Odin, king of the Aesir!

"Oh, it took some convincing," said Mimir. *"Freya was not at all pleased, believe me. But ultimately, she realized it was a worthwhile sacrifice to protect her people—a selfless act of love. And Odin, of course, true to his randy Aesir impulses, was mesmerized by Freya's fertile beauty."*

So Mimir was able to convince Odin to marry Freya even though she was probably his deadliest enemy. I suppose it didn't hurt that she was a master of Vanir magicks . . . and that was something he already wanted to learn.

Fjörgyn, Mother of Thor

Back before I found out the truth about my own mom, Mimir told me about Thor's mother. We were traveling, and I told him I couldn't believe Odin and Freya were ever married.

He said, *"Love and hate are more closely intertwined than you might imagine, lad. For instance, Odin hates the giants, and they him, but Thor's own mother was the giantess Fjörgyn. One of Odin's great loves."*

It's pretty ironic, I guess, because I remember my reply. I said, *"So Thor is half god and half giant? Weird!"* But of course, now I know that Thor and I share the same mix in our blood.

Now *that's* weird!

LORE MARKER

Rites of Fjörgyn

"Here we bear witness to the funeral rites of Fjörgyn of the Jötnar, goddess of the earth and trees. For her beauty she was seduced, for her love she was betrayed, and for her gift of life, her life was claimed. To the summit and across the bridge she shall be borne, where nevermore the Thunder may find her."

Did Thor kill his own mother? Was that the first giant he killed? What does it mean?

Odin and Freya

I still found it hard to picture Freya married to a cruel guy like Odin. But Mimir says Odin actually has a soft side buried deep under all his bluster. After he lost Fjörgyn, who he truly loved, he got really lonely. But as war with the Vanir raged, Mimir says he could sense that the Aesir king wanted someone like Fjörgyn again.

"That's how I came up with the idea of a union," said Mimir. *"And at first, it looked brilliant! Odin really turned on the charm. He seemed happy. Interested in making her happy. He granted her so many wishes I can scarcely recall them all! The peace held, and I truly believed all had worked out better than I could have planned."*

But Odin's true face showed itself eventually. After he won Freya's trust, she taught him some of her Vanir magic—another choice she would live to bitterly regret, according to Mimir. Dabbling in Vanir magic led Odin to new forms of experimentation . . . and, as Mimir says, *"new levels of depravity."*

LORE MARKER

Beware of Seiðr

"Beware of seiðr and those who practice it! Their sorcery is insidious and ever changing, and so are the souls who master it. The more power they summon, the less they are themselves."

Mimir's Eyes

Mimir has special, glowing eyes. Back in the old days, if the giants trusted someone, they'd offer that person an incredible gift: special Bifröst crystals for their eyes so that they can effortlessly travel between realms. Týr got them, of course. Everybody trusted Týr.

But the giants hated Odin and his warlike ways . . . and Mimir was Odin's adviser! So it seems surprising that the giants would trust Mimir with the special eyes too.

It turns out the Jötnar were very impressed with Mimir's peace proposal. And because the early years of the Odin-Freya marital union were pretty good, Mimir began to dedicate himself to making things better between the realms and their peoples.

The giants admired those efforts—and endowed him with Bifröst eyes to thank him!

Baldur's "Curse"

A few years after marrying Odin, Freya gave birth to a son. Mimir says that Baldur became the center of Freya's life the moment he entered the world. A prophecy revealed that Freya's young son would meet an untimely death, so she went crazy and spent the next twenty years trying to find a way to save him!

Freya asked Mimir for his advice, and he reluctantly agreed to help. He assisted her in finding a special divination spell that could render Baldur invulnerable to harm. As an experienced sorceress, Freya knew it was dangerous to cast *any* spell on a loved one—much less a divination spell—but she was desperate and out of options.

The spell worked, but there were consequences. Baldur was protected from harm, but he could feel no pleasure or pain! As a result, says Mimir, *"This alienated Baldur from the libertine Aesir culture. From then on, he seethed with burning resentment at his mother's interference in his life."*

One other thing: almost every protection enchantment has a built-in weakness. When Freya cast her spell on Baldur, she and Mimir both knew that only one thing, mistletoe, could penetrate its protection. Freya didn't want to take any chances, so she magically clouded Mimir's mind, erasing any memories of the spell's details.

So every time we asked Mimir about it, he could only repeat, *"Baldur is blessed with invulnerability to all threats, physical or magical."*

Freya and the Valkyries

Mother told many stories of the Valkyries, the winged warrior spirits known as the Choosers of the Slain who select which fallen warriors are worthy of going on to Valhalla or Fólkvangr. When Father and I finally liberated Sigrun, the Valkyrie queen, she told us something really surprising. Sigrun insisted that the nine Valkyries believed they had only one *true* queen—the goddess Freya!

Mimir confirmed this, telling us that during her years in Asgard, Freya was granted command of the Valkyries as part of her marriage compact with Odin, adding Valkyrie wings to her Warrior Spirit. In return, Freya fulfilled Odin's desire to learn the ways of seiðr, not realizing it was only feeding his crazy obsession with preventing Ragnarök.

Mimir told us that as Freya witnessed Odin's continued corrupt use of her magic, she found it impossible to deny his bad intent. She stayed in Asgard for years for the sake of peace, but during that time she grew apart from her mad spouse. When they finally broke apart, Odin snatched away Freya's Valkyrie wings *and* her Warrior Spirit!

Sigrun told us more about it: *"When Odin severed Freya's wings, I served in her absence. But it wasn't enough for the Allfather. He used an archaic piece of magic to corrupt my sisters. I tried to contain the damage by imprisoning them in places where they could cause no harm, but soon . . . I lost myself as well."*

Luckily, Father and I managed to free all nine of the Valkyrie spirits from their corrupted physical forms by defeating each one. But now, according to Mimir, Freya is out searching for her Warrior Spirit again! She's still really mad at us for killing her son, so there's no telling what she'll do if she finds those lost wings.

The Huldra Brothers

Everybody agrees that our good friends Brok and Sindri, known as the Huldra brothers, are the greatest dwarven blacksmiths ever, which is pretty cool. But as Mimir has explained, after they crafted the most powerful weapon ever made . . . they gave it to the wrong guys!

Brok and Sindri made Mjölnir, Thor's hammer. Mimir calls it *"the Aesir's greatest murder weapon, the bane of giantkind."* He says the brothers crafted it many years ago, when they were eager to make a name for themselves. But, as he says, *"Rather overdid it with that one, methinks."* After they delivered Mjölnir to Asgard, Thor's crazy killing spree began.

The brothers still feel guilty about creating that hammer. Mimir says that every time news of another giant's death would reach them, they would start quarreling and blaming each other. Sindri told me they tried to restore a balance by forging a powerful new weapon, the Leviathan Axe, and then gave it to the giantess guardian of Midgard—my mother, Faye!

Both brothers have told me they liked Mother a lot, and they really miss her now.

After the Huldra brothers split up, Sindri wanted to expand his skills beyond weapon making, so he sought out knowledge in Vanaheim. Among other things, he learned how to harness the power of dragons' teeth! Brok stayed focused on weapons. We heard he got kicked out of Alfheim for some kind of drunken rampage!

One last thing: Mother always told me that Huldra were sprites of the forest. Mimir confirms this, saying Huldra sprites are *"beautiful and seductive."* But when I asked why Brok and Sindri are called Huldra then, Mimir told me that my ears are too young and innocent to hear!

I don't get it . . .

Freya's Banishment

Mimir says that Freya was better to Odin than the Aesir king deserved, sticking it out through all manner of indignities . . . all in the name of maintaining peace and safety for her people. For example: When a giant king named Thrym stole Mjölnir (you can read about Thrym later), Odin offered to trade Freya for the hammer's return. But it was a trick! When Thor grabbed Mjölnir and started attacking the giants' court, Freya stepped in to stop the slaughter.

This made Odin really angry, of course. After that, things got worse and worse.

"His madness, his tyranny, his corruption of her magicks—it became more than Freya could stomach, and at long last she broke it off," says Mimir. *"Odin's wrath was fierce, and his curses upon her were worse than she'd dared to fear."*

I figured Freya's magic would be stronger than Odin's, but Mimir says that after so much time together, Odin knew Freya's vulnerabilities and exploited them to cast seiðr curses she could never break. He trapped her in Midgard and sealed off Vanaheim from the rest of the realms. So now Freya can't go home to her Vanir tribe. Plus, Odin robbed her of her Warrior Spirit. She can't even fight to defend herself!

Scroll Marker

Vanaheim Sealed

"Our vengeance upon the Vanir gods is at hand. Their realm is isolated by Odin's spellcraft, and infiltrated presently by his chosen Einherjar. Their absence may be long felt by our folk, but we will keep up the Allfather's work in Midgard. Our priority remains Jötunheim."

—The Raven Keeper

"No living thing may she harm, by blade nor spell," says Mimir. *"And worst of all, her beloved son Baldur chose to stay with his father, angrily declaring he never wanted to see her again."*

Stripped of her Valkyrie wings, and her weapons made useless, Freya isolated herself in the sanctuary grove of Midgard. There she made friends with Chaurli, the giant tortoise who shelters her house. I like that guy! Her only other companion is Hildisvíni, a Vanir shape shifter stuck in the form of a boar . . . who I almost killed with an arrow. Man, I really felt bad about that.

Odin and the Desolation

One nasty side effect of Odin's corruption of the Valkyries is that there was no one left to sort the dead. Helheim overflowed! We found a marker with a prayer etched into the surface that called it *"Hel's wild hunt."* Whoever wrote it was begging for Odin's help, not knowing it was his fault to begin with.

I wonder if it's something Odin intended all along, or if he just didn't care that everyone in Midgard suffered because of it.

LORE MARKER

Prayer to Odin

"Find here our sacrifice, mighty Allfather, and deliver Midgard from Hel's wild hunt. Odin, wisest of all, whose breath gave life to Ask and Embla, first among our people, we beg your protection. Send forth your noble Valkyries and cull the deathless. Send forth your noble sons, Thor and Baldur, to shield us. Send forth dragons to consume the frigid horde. Save our souls that we may serve you ever more."

Odin's Obsession

The Jötnar prophecy of Ragnarök says that the giants will rise up to fight Odin and the Aesir—and that the battle will end up destroying everyone and everything. It's what Gróa saw and why Odin killed her. She was, unfortunately, the first of many giants to die because of the prophecy. And for some mad reason, Odin thinks he can stop the apocalypse if he can just destroy all of Jötunkind . . . a genocide of giants!

It's why Odin had Brok and Sindri make Mjölnir in the first place—though he didn't tell them that at the time. He said he needed a gift for his eldest son, one worthy of the god of thunder. They didn't know Odin would order Thor to go on a giant-killing rampage with it. Mimir says Thor's a *"fat, drunk bully"* who already liked to hurt people, so killing giants was something he *loved*.

It's really hard not to hate Thor based on everything I've ever heard about him. Father's helped me work on controlling my rage, even as he tries to do the same with his. But if I ever meet Thor, I don't know what I'll do. After all, he was Modi's father, and no one's ever gotten under my skin like him.

I just hope things don't end the same way. I really am trying to be better.

Magni and Modi

I guess I should get into Magni and Modi, the sons of Thor—although they're barely worthy of mention as far as I'm concerned. Both were legendarily strong like their father, even as kids. When Hrungnir, the stone giant, fell dead on top of Thor, trapping him, little Magni and Modi were the only ones strong enough to free him. Funny, everyone thinks Magni achieved this feat alone, and Mimir says that made Modi really bitter. *"Bitterness is like poison,"* Mother always said. Boy, was she right.

Anyway, Magni and Modi's uncle Baldur recruited the poor fools into his effort to track down the giant that Odin thought was loose in Midgard. We spotted them questioning Mimir at the Mountain's summit just before we cut Mimir loose from the tree . . . well, part of him. Later, Magni met Father's axe near Thamur's magic chisel, and Modi met my knife in the Mountain cavern.

It sounds mean, but I don't think anybody misses them.

Týr, God of War

Mother's favorite god, by far, was Týr. At first it seemed strange to me, since he was the Aesir god of war. But in her stories, all of Týr's battles were really fought for peace! With a reputation for being fair and lawful, Týr used his power and knowledge to *stop* wars, instead of start them.

Of course, Mimir actually knew Týr and says people throughout the realms really did love him. Týr believed that the mind, not might, was key to preventing war and chaos. I was glad to learn that good gods actually do exist . . . even if it's just *"once in a moon,"* as Mimir says.

One reason Týr was so open minded was that he liked to travel and meet new people. Mimir says Týr knew visiting other cultures would give him perspectives that staying in one place could not. You can see this clearly in the tapestries on the walls in Týr's vault.

"While Odin always hoarded knowledge, guarding it jealously, Týr was open and sharing with his learning and his wisdom," said Mimir. *"For this, mortals the world over adored Týr, showing their love by bringing him gifts."*

Týr and the Jötnar

Mimir also told us that Týr felt responsible for what Odin did to the giants. Shortly after Mjölnir was forged, Týr arranged a diplomatic meeting between Odin and the giant kings. Odin had convinced Týr that the hammer was merely a defensive weapon, a deterrent . . . a way to broker peace from a position of strength.

"This was when the Long War was young," said Mimir, *"when victory was still a thing dreamed of, and the Jötnar might have tipped the balance between Aesir and Vanir."*

Týr knew the giants were deeply concerned about the hammer, a superweapon in hands they did not trust. But they trusted Týr. Týr always believed the best of people—and taking Odin at his word in his desire for peace, he brought the Raven King to Jötunheim. Sadly, all Odin cared about by then was stealing the Jötnar prophecies.

Things fell apart quickly. The giants were ready for Odin's trickery and exposed his true agenda to spy and steal their secret wisdom. With magicks, they expelled Odin from their realm and cursed him never to return.

The Withdrawal from Midgard

Frustrated by his failure in the Jötunheim court, Odin turned his fury on the giants of Midgard. He directed Thor to unleash Mjölnir's might upon any giant he could find. Mimir says it was a terrible time: *"None could stand against the tide of slaughter that followed."* For decades, the Midgard giants tried to fight back, but fell by the dozens.

Finally, after sixty bloody years, all remaining Midgard giants (except Mother and the great serpent Jörmungandr) retreated to Jötunheim and destroyed all the realm's bridges so the Aesir couldn't follow. With Týr's help, the Jötunheim realm's travel tower on the Lake of Nine disappeared too.

After that, no man or god set foot in Jötunheim again . . . until Father and I arrived.

Scroll Marker

The Missing Tower

"The search for any trace of the Jötunheim Tower remains fruitless. Not only in Midgard, but in all realms in which the tower once stood, there is now only a mystic echo of what was. Had it been destroyed by might, some remnant would remain, but this magical vestige suggests magical means. It must exist somewhere. Our horde of loyal spies continues to grow. I cannot doubt someday we will find it, wherever it may be hidden."

—The Raven Keeper

The sad thing is that Midgard was supposed to be different. Mother once told me there was a time when the races tried to make our realm a special place where everyone was welcome. We even found a wall in Jötunheim dedicated to it.

LORE MARKER

The Dream of Midgard

"Midgard was a dream of what could be if we shared and collaborated. Jötnar, Aesir, Vanir, elves, dwarves, and mortals most of all. It was beautiful. But not everyone is capable of sharing. Some believe anything uncontrolled is savage and threatening. And so we were mocked, and tricked, and used, and then slaughtered.

Odin and his tribe were barred from our realm, but it was not enough. The wrath of Thor and his terrible hammer have thinned our number in Midgard to the brink of ruin. There is no option but to withdraw while yet any live to do so."

Another sad thing is that nobody really knows exactly what happened to Týr. Mimir says Odin suspected Týr of collaborating with the giants instead of helping steal their secrets, and he came to regard Týr as a threat to his rule—*"perhaps rightfully so,"* says Mimir.

Did the Aesir kill him? Put him in some terrible prison? I'd give anything to meet Týr.

What Does Odin Want?

Before I start the next section on all the incredible giant lore I've learned from Mother, Mimir, and others, I have to mention one other thing about Odin and his crazy Ragnarök obsession and schemes.

On one of our trips across Midgard, I asked Mimir if he knew why Baldur was chasing us. He said Baldur was probably tracking us for Odin, who knew we were trying to find Jötunheim, just like Odin.

But Baldur was already hunting us before Father and I even knew Jötunheim was our real destination! I asked Mimir how Odin could know we were looking for Jötunheim before *we* did. Mimir wasn't sure, but he thought it might be that Odin was a crazy collector of prophecies . . . because he's so afraid of the future that awaits him at Ragnarök.

Later, I remembered Mimir's story about Odin's trip to Jötunheim with Týr for that ill-fated meeting with the giant kings—the one where the giants kicked Odin out of their realm forever. I wish I could have seen that! But . . . if Odin made it to Jötunheim, I wonder if he ever spotted the mural on the wall, the one that shows the prophecy of Father and me on all the steps of our journey to Jötunheim.

Maybe something in that mural got Odin all worked up? Maybe he also heard reports of a giant guardian left behind in Midgard—he has so many spies, after all. Maybe Odin thought Father was that giant! When Baldur met Father, I'm sure he thought that: *This big guy's definitely the giant!* But as Father realized when he saw the wall mural . . . Baldur didn't know that the giant he sought was actually Mother!

Of course, I'm part giant too. But there's no way anyone would be hunting for me. I'm just a kid!

Tales of the Giants

Gods are interesting people. But Mother's best stories were always about the giants, the awesome Jötnar race of Jötunheim. Giants were mostly peaceful artisans—craftsmen who built stuff. Their great masons, like Thamur, built huge stone towers and other structures in all nine realms, including the massive wall that surrounds Odin's temple in Asgard!

The Jötnar also tried hard to stay out of the constant wars between the Aesir and the Vanir. Brok told us that, at first, the giants saw the gods more as squabbling children than any kind of real threat. That changed when the deadly hammer Mjölnir fell into Thor's hands.

On our journey, Father and I discovered a bunch of amazing wooden triptych carvings crafted by the Jötnar. Each one is a sacred shrine showing stories and prophecies of famous giants. I'll include my drawings of those. When I was little, Mother told me a few stories about stuff in some of the triptychs, but then Mimir filled in more details after we met him.

Laufey the Just

Here's my favorite giant tale . . . one I never heard from Mother, obviously. After Brok and Sindri forged Mjölnir and saw how Thor put it to use, they felt bad. So they forged a new super-weapon that they hoped could restore the balance of power in the realms: the Leviathan axe.

One day, the brothers got a visit from a great giantess warrior known as Laufey the Just, the last guardian of the Jötnar left in Midgard. The brothers knew her well and considered her a friend, even called her Faye. She always spoke to them in their native tongue, a sign of great respect that they really appreciated.

Laufey asked them for something to help protect her people from being hunted and killed by Thor and his cruel hammer. They gave her the Leviathan axe and hoped that would put a stop to Thor's carnage.

According to Mimir, Mother and Thor never did meet.

With Leviathan in hand, she drove a bunch of the other stupid Aesir out of Midgard, ruining their nasty schemes. She kept the realm clear of Draugr and Hel-Walkers, and chased away trolls and other marauding monsters. But she avoided Thor, helping her Jötnar and other people in other ways while keeping herself hidden.

"Laufey was a chilling rumor in the halls of Asgard," said Mimir. *"A giantess warrior who thwarted many an Aesir god's plans. Freeing those they would enslave, feeding those they would starve, generally making a nuisance of herself in the most* noble *of ways."*

Mimir never met Mother, either. He says Thor was mad that he could never find her to fight her to the death. After the remaining giants retreated to Jötunheim, she got sick of fighting. Sindri told us that she chose another path in the end. *"She chose you,"* he said to Father and me. *"Both of you. I suppose she figured that was the best chance for the giants to live on. And now I suppose that's up to you."*

I suppose it is. I wonder . . . are Jörmungandr and I the only giants left in this whole world? As I think about Mother, Laufey the Just, I remember the words on one of the lore markers we found in Jötunheim. It talks about *"the serpent and the guardian,"* Jörmungandr and Mother, remaining in Midgard to guard the giants' hopes of peace. It says: *"We wait for a champion. We will wait for word that gods grow good."*

I know that gods can be good. Týr was good! But with Mother gone, can Father now be that champion? Or maybe it's supposed to be me? But . . . does it matter anymore? It looks like we started Fimbulwinter by killing Baldur. Ragnarök is coming. Can we stop it? Do we even *want* to stop it?

What would Laufey the Just want us to do? I wish I knew.

LORE MARKER

The Guardian Returns

"We foresee Midgard's fate—overrun, a second Hel. Neither Odin nor his dead may reach Jötunheim. The ways must be shut. The serpent and the guardian remained. They alone shall keep our hope. When doom befalls the indestructible, only then shall the guardian return.

Until then, we await a better world—one without fear, without greed, without war. We wait for deliverance, and justice. We wait for a champion. We will wait for word that gods grow good."

Jörmungandr

Nobody seems to know much about Jörmungandr, the World Serpent. He's a giant, which is awesome, and he hangs out underwater in the Lake of Nine but pops up if you blow the horn on Týr's Temple.

The Jötnar shrine to Jörmungandr in the Vanaheim Tower shows him as a newborn serpent breastfeeding from a very giant-looking mother, surrounded by howling wolves. Wild! But is it real? Or is it meant to be a metaphor for something? He's also in the Jötunheim wall mural, meeting Father and me at the lake—so I guess that was part of a giant prophecy that came true.

Here's something that actually hurts my head when I think about it. When Mimir first spoke with Jörmungandr at Týr's Temple, the great serpent told him, *"The boy seems familiar to me."* He meant ***me***! When I told Mimir that was impossible, he said according to some legends, Jörmungandr and Thor's battle at Ragnarök shakes the Tree of Life so violently that it splinters, casting the serpent backward through time . . . to before his own birth!

So . . . Jörmungandr hasn't actually been born yet? This seems totally insane. Freya told me that the serpent just suddenly appeared in the Lake of Nine one day. Soon after, Thor attacked, and their battle could be felt across all the realms. The fight ended in a stalemate, and Thor returned to Odin empty handed. The serpent stayed in the lake and grew so big he wrapped around Midgard.

Did Jörmungandr just drop in from the future? If so, when will his birth happen? Who are his parents? Will he get to hang out with his baby Jörmi self?

None of it makes sense to me. But then, giant prophecies usually come true.

Scroll Marker

The Serpent

"The serpent cannot be spoken to, but his belligerence toward the Aesir is unmistakable. The destruction of Týr's Temple is infeasible while he remains; however, his presence has caused the Lake of Nine to submerge it completely. Therefore, the larger aim of fettering realm travel is still achieved."

—The Raven Keeper

Ymir the First Giant

I have a vague memory of Mother telling me about Ymir, the first giant . . . I must have been very young. Mimir says Ymir's story has *"a touch of mystery about it."* The legend says that in the beginning, there was something called Ginnungagap, the great void. There were no realms yet, only primordial forces like Fire and Ice.

Mimir says that when Fire and Ice met in the void, they turned into something entirely new . . . some kind of special water that he called a *"mystic life blood."* From this water, Ymir took form as a being of pure creation and chaos, mother and father to all that came after, even including the Aesir!

"Aye, every god, man, and beast came first from the giant Ymir's flesh," says Mimir. *"But the Aesir thought themselves so superior, they wanted to hold dominion over the rest of creation. It was Odin who took up arms against his own creator, and spilled Ymir's lifeblood with his spear. A necessary evil, he would say, to bring order to the realms. Called himself 'Allfather' . . . as if he was the creator, and not the creator's destroyer."*

Makes sense that Odin would kill his own father. Why are gods always doing that?

Surtr the Brave

Mother never told me about Surtr, an ancient Fire Giant with a burning sword who legends say emerged from Ginnungagap right after Ymir. Mimir says Surtr came from Muspelheim, the fire realm, and brought heat to the young cosmos, conjuring the sun with his sword's primordial flame.

We did find Surtr's shrine in Muspelheim. In the triptych carvings, Surtr fights both Thor and Odin at the same time! But Mimir says this is a prophecy—Surtr the Brave will die in this future fight at Ragnarök but burn down Asgard in the process.

"It's part of a grand cycle of death and rebirth, and Surtr accepts his fate," says Mimir. *"Surtr the Brave forged his sword of flame for one purpose alone—to burn down Asgard when Ragnarök comes at last. His destiny is to fall at the hands of Thor and Odin, but in so doing, strike the blow that leaves their realm in ash and ruin. And from that destruction, the world can be born anew."*

Until then, Surtr waits alone in Muspelheim. They say he never sleeps! He just spends all his time training, sharpening his sword skills, waiting for the big fight. He knows he's doomed, but he doesn't care. Surtr has a big job to do. That's why everyone agrees that he's so brave.

"To truly embrace your purpose," says Mimir, *"and the patience and sacrifice it demands, is to ensure your day will come."*

Bergelmir the Beloved

I do remember Mother's stories of Bergelmir, the first Frost Giant who became king of the Jötnar. We found his sacred shrine inside Týr's Temple. His triptych looked happier than the others . . . mostly. Bergelmir definitely had a *lot* of kids. Back then I wrote: *"Bergelmir the Beloved . . . a happy ending! When he died he left on a sea of tears!"*

Mimir later told us that Bergelmir's story actually begins in an ocean of blood! When Father heard this, he said, *"Finally, a story worth hearing."* The blood was Ymir's, bursting out in a huge flood when Odin stabbed him. *"Ymir's magical guts poured out in a torrent so violent it threatened to drown all of creation,"* said Mimir. *"The Jötnar were unprepared, so most of them were washed away in the endless tide. All of giantkind faced extinction."*

But the Frost Giant Bergelmir and his wife stayed afloat in the hollowed husk of a tree. For weeks they rode the bloody surge until finally washing ashore in a new land. They called it Jötunheim, and they started a family that got really, really big . . . and eventually became the giant race.

"As king and queen, they worked to make Jötunheim a peaceful land where giants would know no master but themselves," said Mimir.

Amazingly, Bergelmir never sought payback for Odin's slaughter; his revenge on the Aesir was to see his giant family live and prosper. He died at peace with a huge crowd of his offspring mourning him—the source of the sea of tears in his triptych. He would always be known as Bergelmir the Beloved.

Thamur the Giant Stonemason

Thamur was a mountain-sized giant known as the greatest stonemason in all the realms. We found his Jötnar shrine inside a hidden chamber of Odin just outside Njördholm, the village crushed under Thamur's falling corpse . . . which tells you that things didn't work out so great for the big guy in the end.

The triptych carvings show Thamur building a great stone wall around Jötunheim to protect his people from possible Aesir invaders. He toiled day and night on the massive project. The work was so hard that he asked his son, Hrimthur, to help. But the boy wanted to be a warrior, not a builder, and failed to complete his assigned tasks. In frustration, Thamur let out a bellow so loud it uprooted trees in the nearby woods.

Then they started fighting! Soon Hrimthur ran off and Thamur gave chase, only to find himself lost in Midgard. He howled for the boy, but unfortunately his cries drew the attention of someone else: Thor! Their battle was fierce but quick. A blow from Thor's hammer knocked Thamur into his own chisel, driving it straight through the giant's skull. Thamur was a Frost Giant, so his fall released a burst of frozen energy that cloaked the region in snow and ice for miles.

Hrimthur's Revenge

Hrimthur's story didn't end with Thor's murder of his father, Thamur. The Great Stonemason's son was so distraught that he took up the family's masonry trade and eventually completed his father's masterwork, the Great Wall of Jötunheim. After that, Hrimthur thought of little else but making the Aesir pay for their crimes against the giants. He wanted to just go fight Thor at first, but Hrimthur soon realized that Mjölnir was too powerful. He'd have to use cunning instead.

Hrimthur saw that Asgard's walls were poorly constructed and only half built. As Mimir explained, *"No Aesir god could be bothered with such tiresome labor."* So Hrimthur disguised himself as an ordinary mortal, requested a meeting with Odin, and made an offer: Hrimthur would build majestic new walls around Asgard. If he couldn't finish the job within two years, the Aesir would owe him nothing. But if he beat the deadline, he'd take full payment in the curious form of a private audience with Odin's wife, Freya.

Odin figured he couldn't lose—the project seemed too enormous—so he agreed to the strange terms. Thanks to his father's training, Hrimthur had become a great mason in his own right. He also had a secret advantage—a magic horse that could find and deliver masonry stones with shocking speed! And so he finished the wall with time to spare.

Odin hated to lose any wager, but he dutifully sent Freya to meet the mason. To her surprise, Hrimthur wanted only to whisper something in her ear. Then, when the giant returned to Midgard, he found Thor with Mjölnir, waiting for him at the realm gate. Turns out Odin figured out Hrimthur was a giant and sent his giant-slayer son to do his bloody work.

But Mimir says that Hrimthur didn't care. His plan was complete. When I asked what the mason's son whispered to Freya, Mimir replied: *"Only she could say for certain, but I've had many moons to work it out. Hrimthur knew that Freya loathed the Aesir, despite her marriage to Odin . . . and I believe he gave her the secret to Asgard's defenses. Some weakness he may have built in, structural or magical, which I expect will be exploited come Ragnarök when Surtr arrives to burn Asgard to ash. If not sooner . . . "*

Starkaðr, the Eight-Armed Giant

When we found the Jötnar shrine to Starkaðr just inside the Konùnsgard stronghold, I couldn't believe it—a great giant warrior with eight arms, swinging four swords! Mimir knows the sad story of Starkaðr's demise because . . . well, it was kind of his fault. Odin plotted to kill Starkaðr after hearing Mimir praise him as a likely leader of giants!

"Starkaðr the Mighty, he was called," says Mimir. *"If the giants ever had anything so organized as an army, Starkaðr would have been their general—an opinion, in retrospect, I should have kept to myself."*

Odin set Thor to the task of taking down the mighty giant, but as Mimir adds, *"Even Thor wasn't stupid enough to take on Starkaðr on his own."* Instead, the sly Aesir started a campaign of false rumors, spreading the word throughout the realms that Starkaðr was a bloodthirsty monster to be feared.

"They said he abducted an elf queen, who killed herself rather than be ravished by the giant," says Mimir.

These terrible lies riled up the realms, including even the Vanir gods and the mortal armies of Midgard. They surrounded Starkaðr and loosed an incredible shower of arrows until he fell to his knees. The giant surrendered, hoping a fair trial would clear his name. But Thor took advantage of his submission, rushed in, and started tearing off Starkaðr's arms!

"Relieved of six arms and too much blood, Starkaðr perished upon the battlefield," says Mimir . . . and I can tell he feels pretty bad. *"I regret it to this day, you know. I told myself there was nothing I could do. But I wish I'd tried."*

Hrungnir the Brawler

Mother told me about Hrungnir the Brawler, the giant warrior. The poor guy was born without a head or heart, so the giants replaced them with stone. This gave him the mind of a child and a constant desire to bluster and fight! When we found Hrungnir's shrine in the old Jötnar ruins at River Pass, its triptych carvings showed him in a fierce battle involving Thor, Odin, and even the World Serpent! But Mimir told me later, *"That's stretching it a bit."* Once again, it turns out Mimir was there to witness the real story.

Mimir says Odin ran into Hrungnir in Midgard. The Aesir king found the big simpleton so gullible and amusing he invited him to visit his palace in Asgard. There he tricked Hrungnir into swilling a bunch of mead, and then goaded the drunk giant into jabbering boasts and threats, which cracked up everybody in the court.

"I was there," said Mimir. *"I saw the Aesir laugh as Hrungnir leapt upon his shield and swore he'd kill us all and take our womenfolk back to Jötunheim."*

But then Thor arrived, looking surly. Mimir says the thunder god took one look at the drunken stone buffoon and suddenly brought Mjölnir down so hard on Hrungnir's stone head that it shattered in a thousand pieces. Thor got sprayed with a faceful of rock and was so disoriented that he didn't notice Hrungnir's colossal body toppling toward him. It landed atop Thor with a sickening crunch. Thor couldn't move!

"Once again, the roars of laughter echoed through the palace halls," said Mimir.

I told Mimir that was an awful story, nothing like the ones Mother told me. He just said, *"Let that be a lesson, m'son—truth is seldom so pretty as myth and legend."*

One other thing that *was* kind of funny: When the slain Hrungnir fell onto Thor, nobody in the court had the strength to lift him off! Then little Magni and Modi entered the hall, *"no taller than shrubs,"* said Mimir. While only Mimir was looking, they flipped over Hrungnir's corpse and freed their father.

"Magni, being blonder, got all the credit," said Mimir. *"Modi remained bitter about it, from that day to the end."*

Thrym the Cunning

Thrym was a particularly crafty giant king who once stole Thor's mighty hammer Mjölnir. On the Thrym shrine we found near Lookout Tower on the lake, the carvings show that Thor gets Mjölnir back and hammers Thrym and his court pretty badly. If not for Freya, he might have killed every last giant in Jötunheim! Seems like Thor does a lot of giant killing in the old tales.

As usual with any lore involving Odin, Mimir knew the whole story. He said Thrym swiped Mjölnir when Thor (who he always calls *"the thunder lummox"*) was sleeping. *"Sadly for Thrym,"* said Mimir, *"he didn't always think with his brain."* He had just robbed the greatest giant killer of his most lethal weapon . . . but immediately offered to trade it back to the Aesir in exchange for Freya as his bride!

Crafty Odin saw an opportunity to finally get inside Jötunheim, so he agreed to the terms. He coerced Freya into using her seiðr magicks to hide Thor, then sneak him into Thrym's palace when the giants escorted her inside. Upon their arrival, Thrym produced Mjölnir for transport back to Asgard. But Thor popped out of hiding, grabbed the hammer and smashed Thrym's skull, killed every other giant present for the festivities, and got ready to exit the palace and lay waste to Jötunheim.

"The only thing that put a stop to the slaughter was Freya, who wanted no part of this massacre," said Mimir. *"She cast a powerful spell that hurtled them both out of Jötunheim with no means of return. Odin was livid, hoping that Thor's foothold in Jötunheim would become his own. And oh, would he ever revenge himself upon Freya."*

Gróa the Knowledge Keeper

Gróa's triptych shrine in Alfheim depicts a sorceress giant with visions of the future and a really big library of books. Mimir says that as a seer she was unsurpassed . . . the first to have a vision of Ragnarök! This attracted attention from the wrong place, unfortunately.

"Gróa was known as the Knowledge Keeper because she gathered every tome of arcane wisdom she could find in the realms," said Mimir. *"This was all in the hopes of augmenting her powers of prophecy that she might find her lost husband, Aurvandil."*

The knowledge that Gróa gathered from her books *did* make her future vision better. In fact, Gróa saw longer and farther than any giant before or since. But she couldn't see her husband. Instead, she saw Ragnarök! *"The end and the beginning,"* according to Mimir.

When Odin caught word of this ultimate prophecy, he decided it was time to steal Gróa's knowledge and hoard it for himself. The ruthless Aesir king had always treated Gróa with respect, so she welcomed him into her library as a friend. What she didn't know was that Odin himself was behind her husband's disappearance! His son Thor had killed Aurvandil as part of his barbaric giant-slaying rampage. Odin kept this a secret because he knew Gróa's desire to find Aurvandil stretched her prophecy powers to amazing new heights.

The way Mimir described their final meeting in Gróa's library still makes me sick. He said, *"Smiling, Odin took her by the throat, and with his very hands he stole her library and her life for his own."*

Skaði, Queen of the Hunt

Mother was a big admirer of Skaði, the great huntress. I got excited when we found her Jötnar shrine just inside the castle at Veithurgard and I saw she uses a bow like me! Known as Queen of the Hunt, Skaði could hunt birds, boars, deer . . . anything. Her father, Thiazi, could take the shape of any wild creature, and he taught Skaði how to track them all. She took ribs of pack beasts and made special shoes that glided over snow so no animal could escape her, even in winter.

"She became a huntress beyond compare," Mimir told us. *"Odin himself wanted her for his bride, believing she would bear him strong sons. But she spurned his affections . . . and for that insult, Odin vowed revenge."*

So Odin told Skaði that a huge eagle kept stealing precious golden Iðunn apples from the Aesir. Not even the finest archers among the gods could bring it down, he said. Odin knew that Skaði could not resist the temptation to prove herself the greatest hunter in all the realms. Sure enough, she joined the eagle hunt.

Skaði's special shoes let her track the great bird as it flew over icy land where she alone could travel. Finally, she got in range and loosed an arrow, right on target. But when Skaði reached the carcass, she found no eagle at all, but her own father, poor Thiazi. Slain by his own daughter!

"Legend says Skaði, overcome with grief and shame, succumbed to her fate as winter's blanket fell," said Mimir. *"She held her father as the mountain held her, in an embrace to last eternity."*

Man, Skaði's story is one of the saddest I ever heard. But, as Mimir always says, there aren't many happy endings for the giants in the old lore. I wonder if Skaði is still out there somewhere, under the frozen mountains?

Sköll & Hati, the Wolf-Giants

One of my favorite childhood stories is the tale of Sköll and Hati, the wolf-giants. In the lore, they run across the sky, chasing the horse-drawn chariots that pull the sun and moon. Mother called them *"the bringers of day and night."* On the day Mother died, we found the Jötnar shrine to Sköll and Hati in the old temple ruins near our hut.

Later, Mimir explained some of the carvings on the triptych. He told us that Sköll and Hati were offspring of the archwolf Hróðvitnir, a powerful enemy of the Aesir gods. Odin captured them as pups and, at first, held them hostage in the kennels of Asgard to keep his scary foe at bay. But the legend says that when the sun and moon stood still one day, threatening to stop time, Odin used his ancient magicks to cast Sköll and Hati into the sky. They began to chase the heavenly orbs, and time started up again!

"And long shall they chase . . . but not endlessly," said Mimir. *"For it is foretold that someday Sköll and Hati will catch and devour their prey. And that day shall be Ragnarök, the twilight of the gods."*

That confused me. Ragnarök is supposed to bring Odin's doom, and he's always trying so hard to stop that from happening. Why would he set the wolves loose if it fulfills the prophecy? But Mimir explained that, with Odin, it's always about control. After all, the wolves determine when Ragnarök begins . . . and now Odin controls the wolves!

My Norse Timeline

Mother told so many amazing stories, but she never really mentioned dates or even the order in which things happened. As I got older, I started to wonder about the chronology of all these events. I planned to ask her someday and make up a timeline of Norse history. But . . . well, we lost her before I could do that.

I just never thought she would be gone so soon. I thought I'd get old, maybe have a son or daughter myself. They would grow up hearing Grandma Faye's stories too.

Anyway, during our journey Father and I learned a lot more about the lore of our lands. Recently, Mimir, Brok, and Sindri helped me put things in the right order. Some dates may not be exactly right, but Mimir thinks they're pretty close.

Father helped a bit, too. He's tried to remember his life since arriving here from his old home . . . a place he rarely talks about. He doesn't hide things when I ask anymore, but I can see it hurts when I do. And when he tells me things about living with Mother before I was born, he stares so sadly at the fire that I usually just let him fall into silence.

I feel his pain now.

?

A *Really* Long Time Ago

I can't pinpoint when exactly this was, but when Freyr—Freya's brother and a leader of the Vanir—visits Asgard to offer gifts in exchange for peace between the two tribes of gods, the Aesir toss him into a fire. Luckily, he escapes, but when he returns to Vanaheim, his outraged kin declare all-out war on the Aesir. The Long War of the Gods begins.

?

A Long Time Ago

Mimir arrives in the Northlands and becomes a trusted adviser to Odin and his Aesir court. Mimir can't remember exactly how long ago it was because—his words—"I was often so drunk I couldn't remember my own name, much less dates."

200

Two Hundred Years Ago

Brok and Sindri forge Mjölnir for Odin. Odin gives the hammer to his son Thor for use against the Aesir's enemies.

125

One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years Ago

With the help of her mentor, Hildisvíni, and Mimir, Freya finally finds a powerful protection spell for Baldur. It's risky to mix new and old magic, but she casts it on her son to keep him safe from harm. The spell works, but his new invulnerability has a side effect: a total loss of any feeling—bad or good. According to Mimir, the Aesir world is all about feasting, fighting, and . . . other F-words. To Baldur, the enchantment is like a walking death.

Meanwhile, Odin and Freya grow apart as Odin becomes more obsessed with Ragnarök. He also experiments with seiðr magic in nasty new ways, which Freya finds disturbing.

120

118

One Hundred and Twenty Years Ago

Peace between the realms starts to break down as Odin gets crazier about finding Jötunheim to learn the giants' Ragnarök prophecies. He sends Thor with Mjölnir to interrogate and kill any giants who remain in Midgard.

Freya can't take it anymore. She tries to return to Vanaheim, but Odin casts a powerful spell that traps her in Midgard. Worse, the spell also steals her Warrior Spirit. Now Freya can't fight any living thing . . . not even to defend herself!

Baldur hates his mom so much that he stays in Asgard with his manipulative dad.

Odin also tries to control Freya's Valkyries with a spell that transforms them from spirits into physical creatures. It corrupted them, making them super-powerful monsters with an overwhelming lust to kill everyone they meet.

One Hundred and Eighteen Years Ago

The corrupted Valkyries kill wildly across the nine realms. Sigrun, who steps up as the new Valkyrie queen after Freya's exile, feels herself slipping into their madness too. Before losing her wits, Sigrun manages to lock the monstrous husks of her Valkyrie sisters into dungeons scattered across the realms.

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One Hundred and Thirty-Four Years Ago

Brok and Sindri isolate themselves for months, working on a new weapon that can rival Mjölnir. I get the sense something bad happened, but haven't been able to figure out what. Sindri didn't want to talk about it, and Brok acted like he didn't remember. I gave up asking because Sindri said I was giving him dropsy . . . whatever that means

One Hundred and Thirty-Three Years Ago

Brok and Sindri finally finish their new weapon, the Leviathan Axe. They give it to the giantess warrior Laufey (my mom!), hoping it can help if Thor goes on another vicious hammer rampage.

One Hundred and Forty Years Ago

Odin is jealous of all the love Týr is getting in the realms, plus he suspects (correctly) that Týr helped the giants hide the Jötunheim realm tower. Odin sends a bunch of monsters and Aesir gods (what's the difference, right?) to attack Týr's Temple in the Lake of Nine. Týr disappears without a trace.

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One Hundred and Forty-Five Years Ago

Freya gives birth to Baldur. Soon after, she hears a prophecy of her son's early death. She spends the next twenty years looking for ways to prevent it.

150

One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago

Mimir arranges the wedding of Freya and Odin as part of a peace plan to end the war between Aesir and Vanir. Things are good, at first. Odin gains Freya's trust, and she teaches him Vanir and seiðr magic.

One Hundred and Seventy-Five Years Ago

Thor's bloody campaign against the giants and Vanir gods tips the balance of power toward the Aesir. Lots of giants are killed. Everybody is afraid.

Brok and Sindri realize they've made a terrible mistake and start blaming each other.

175

One Hundred and Seventy Years Ago

Týr brings Odin to Jötunheim for a peace conference with the giant kings. Everything goes bad, and the giants kick Odin out of Jötunheim for good.

The giants, now sure Odin can't be trusted, ask Týr to block any travel to Jötunheim from his temple. Týr removes their Jötunheim realm tower from the Lake of Nine, hiding it where the Aesir can't find it in the "Realm between Realms." This makes Odin really mad.

The giants leave one last bridge from Midgard to Jötunheim. The Midgard end is atop the Mountain's summit, protected by the secret Black Rune, which only giants know about. They give the runestone to Týr for use only in an emergency. He hides the Black Rune in the vaults of his temple.

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One Hundred and Twelve Years Ago

Brok and Sindri keep blaming each other for their past mistakes. After a big fight that nearly destroys their workshop, the brothers finally part ways, vowing never to work together again.

One Hundred and Fifteen Years Ago

Father arrives in the Northlands. For years, he lives alone deep in the woods. He meets many monsters and creatures, but avoids people.

A long winter freezes the realms, which Odin fears to be Fimbulwinter—the frigid three-year stretch that is said to precede Ragnarök.

One Hundred and Thirteen Years Ago

The long winter eventually ends (to everyone's relief), but Odin's paranoia gets much worse after this close call. He directs the Aesir to resume their brutal campaign to conquer the realms.

As Thor and Mjölnir continue their unstoppable rampage, the giants finally decide to make a full retreat to Jötunheim.

One Hundred and Ten Years Ago

Mimir advises Odin that the only way to stop Ragnarök is to create peace and harmony between all the realms, but Odin is so paranoid that he concludes that Mimir is now in league with the giants. He magically binds his adviser with Yggdrasil's roots to the great tree on the Mountain's summit in Midgard . . . facing the only working bridge to Jötunheim.

Odin thinks that Mimir must know the special giant rune that can open the bridge, but Mimir truly has no idea what it is. Odin doesn't believe him and tortures Mimir every single day for the next 109 years. Odin gouges out one of Mimir's Bifröst crystal eyes and stashes it in the huge statue of Thor on the Lake of Nine.

Eighty-Nine Years Ago

Odin creates the Traveler religion to conscript great warriors unknowingly into his search for a path to Jötunheim.

1

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One Year Ago

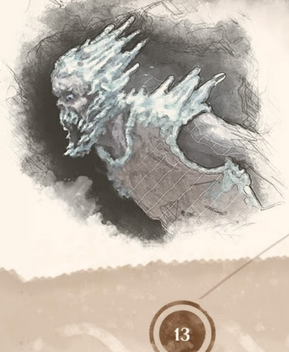
Mother dies. Following her instructions, Father and I set out to spread her ashes from the highest peak in the realms. After quite a journey, we complete the task in Jötunheim . . . and learn Mother's amazing secret.

Three Years Ago

Odin learns that one giant stayed behind in Midgard, hidden in plain sight to keep an eye on things. The giant's identity is unknown, and Odin's network of all-seeing raven spies yields nothing. Odin sends his son Baldur into Midgard to search for the giant, promising that if they can persuade the giant to steer them to Jötunheim, they can break Freya's protection spell.

Six Years Ago

Nearly all mortals have disappeared from Midgard. Hel-Walkers now dominate the landscape, forcing the last few groups of humans in the realm to band together to survive the hostile new world.



Thirteen Years Ago

Mother gives birth to a son. Yeah, it's me. She wants to name me Loki. But Father prefers the name Atreus—a great Spartan soldier, his friend. He says Atreus always remained positive and hopeful despite the grim horrors of war and gladly gave his life in battle to help his fellow soldiers gain a crucial victory. Father carried Atreus's body over a hundred miles to lay him to rest in his home soil of Sparta.

Forty Years Ago

Kratos and Faye—my parents—first meet in Midgard. Both are warriors by nature, so their instinct is to fight, but amazingly they yielded as quickly as they started. They talk and become friends. Both are sick of war and violence.

Side note: I asked Father once how he didn't realize Mom wasn't a normal Midgard woman if he met her so long ago and she still looked so young and vibrant when I was little. He said, *"When you have lived for centuries, talk to me again about what a decade here or there feels like."* I seriously can't tell if he was joking or not. Knowing Father though . . . probably not.

Thirty-Five Years Ago

Faye and Kratos decide to build a hut together in Wildwoods. Mother marks off the area with a magical stave (her yellow handprint) to hide it from the sight of all gods and monsters. They live a simple, peaceful life together. Father tells Mother all about his past, but Mother keeps her giant lineage secret. She never tells him about the reason she's in Midgard.

Twenty Years Ago

Helheim is full! For a thousand years, every soul who didn't die a glorious warrior's death in battle has been conscripted into Hel's Army. Those unwilling soldiers are fated to march out and cleanse the other realms (by killing everyone) before Ragnarök. Now Hel's Army is complete, so all the new dead souls are getting tossed back into their rotting bodies! These guys are crawling out of the ground in Midgard as Hel-Walkers—very angry creatures who just want to kill things.

Chapter V

BESTIARY

Father and I have fought some nasty monsters over the past year. Whenever we meet a new foe, or learn something new about an old foe, I write notes about it in this bestiary. I want a good catalog of all the creatures we've met, something Mother taught me to value. I also want an easy guide that I can check quickly if we run into more of these creatures.

Of course, Father still doesn't think much of it. When I try to show him an entry, he says, *"You keep your catalog, boy, I'll keep mine . . ."* and then he points at his head. At least he admits my notes could help other warriors.

Since coming back from our journey, I've reordered my loose pages alphabetically according to type of creature—Ancient, beast, Dark Elf, Draugr, Hel-Walker, Nightmare, seiðr, and troll. I also added a type I call *"elites"*—scary foes who are extra tough. Then, under each species, I list each type that Father and I have fought so far. For example, under *"Draugr"* I list the many disgusting types of Draugr we've killed: the regular Draugr, Heavy Draugr, Projectile Draugr, Speed Draugr, and so on.

Each entry starts with my original journal notes, plus my sketch of the creature (I added my class rating too). Then I include any more notes we've learned, plus a quick table listing things like strengths, weaknesses, and sometimes other special stuff about the creature.

Creature Classes

Mother always watched creatures carefully, even while fighting them. That's pretty hard to do sometimes! But she was a great warrior herself, something I didn't really know until Father and I took our journey. Anyway, Mother taught me to watch the creatures too—to compare their strengths and weaknesses, learn their moves, and keep track of their habits.

So, for quick fighting reference, I made up a classification system. It rates each type of enemy according to how hard they are to beat. For example, some of the creatures we fought were pretty easy to kill. I call those *"fodder."* Others were crazy powerful, like the Valkyries. I call those *"elite"* and put them into a separate section at the end of the bestiary.

Here's my five-tier class system:

Easiest to Kill — *Hardest to Kill*

1	2	3	4	5
FODDER	GRUNT	BRUTE	MONSTER	ELITE

Fodder, Grunts, and Brutes

Most foes we fought were lesser creatures that I classified as fodder (easy to kill), grunt (sort of difficult), and brute (needs extra skill). Hostiles often attacked us in mixed groups, and their combined skills made fights much harder for us to win. Lots of times, Father and I had to vary our tactics in the heat of battle.

Monsters

These days, almost any trip across the realms includes a fight with a troll, ogre, or Ancient—huge, angry monsters, more powerful than grunts but way less tricky than the gods and godlike elite of the highest tier. These ugly beasts are incredibly strong, with simple attacks. Their moves are slow and easy to see coming if Father and I know what to look for. Still, the sheer force of a monster's slam can be hard to counter. I hate these guys!

Elites

Father and I met some hostile Asgardian gods, a dragon the size of a small mountain, and a few other insanely powerful foes who nearly wiped us out. But Father and I are too good a team to ever lose. We killed them all, so we don't need fighting tips anymore. But I added them to the bestiary out of respect.

How I Organized My Pages

Each entry starts with my original journal notes, plus my sketch of the creature (I added my class rating too). Then I include any more notes we've learned, plus a quick table listing things like strengths, weaknesses, and sometimes other special stuff about the creature.

Ancient

Ancients are absurdly old and scary to fight because none of our normal attacks damage them. Every Ancient resembles a regular rock pile until it stands up—then look out! The monster cracks open its chest and fires a killer beam from its glowing heart.

Luckily, we learned that if Father hits the exposed heart with a good axe toss, chunks pop out. If you can pick up and toss these heart chunks back at the Ancient, the explosion stuns it long enough for Father to jump on the creature and bash it good.

These old guys have other attacks with different elemental effects: light, burn, and frost. But once we defeat any Ancient, we can collect its heart and rubble and deliver the resources to Brok or Sindri, who can use them to craft really amazing gear.

I have to admit, I really hate killing Ancients. Even though they're huge and hostile, they've been around so long and must have seen so many things. I wish I could talk to one. I bet I'd learn a lot. But that's not possible. Unless we sneak past, they immediately attack us!

Of course, Father has no problem with killing them. He says they're monsters without thought whose only purpose is to kill. But I'm not so sure Ancients are unthinking. I sense something when we fight. I can't quite *"hear"* it clearly, but it feels like Ancients are sort of . . . confused. I think they wonder who we are. Too bad they don't give us a chance to explain.

Fire Ancient

Class: Monster

I could feel the heat off this one from the boat. I guess now we know what happened to all these broken ships . . .

MORE NOTES:

After the Lake of Nine's water dropped a second time, Father and I paddled to the beach of Iron Cove. The Fire Ancient sat in a heap of rocks next to a coffin. Father got its attention, and the fight was on! The Ancient had three basic attacks: fire mortars, a fire blast, and fire missiles

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Forest Ancient

Class: Monster

We ran into an Ancient of the forest on our way out of Fáfnir's storeroom. This one was walking around, instead of just hibernating like most of them do. Or maybe we woke it up while we were trying to get inside? These Ancients are kind of beautiful . . . I wish their hearts weren't so valuable.

MORE NOTES:

The Forest Ancient attacked us with a fire blast, missiles, and a variety of beams. Honestly, fighting the old guy wasn't totally necessary, but he dropped a lot of useful goodies when he was defeated!

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Frost Ancient

Class: Monster

We ran into a Frost Ancient on our way up the Mountain. Before this journey, I thought all the Ancients were made of fire and rock, but I guess it's just the rock part they all share. This one must have originally been part of the Mountain itself. I bet it got tired of being a mountain, and one day just got up and walked away.

MORE NOTES:

Like I said, we found one Frost Ancient sleeping inside the Mountain soon after we rode the elevator up through the central shaft. Unlike the Fire Ancients we fought before, this guy tossed frost and beam attacks that slowed us down if they hit us.

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Ice Ancient

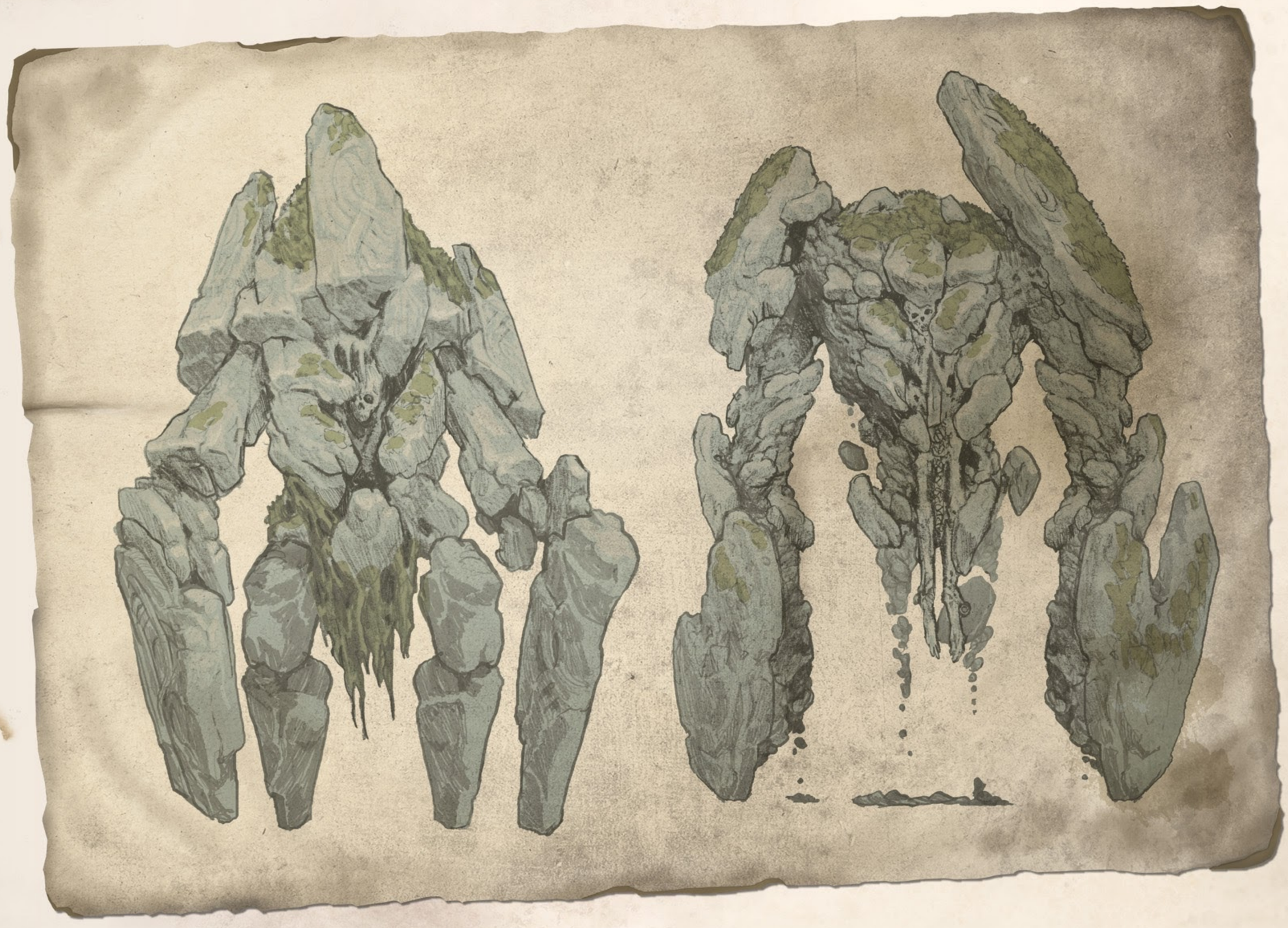
Class: Monster

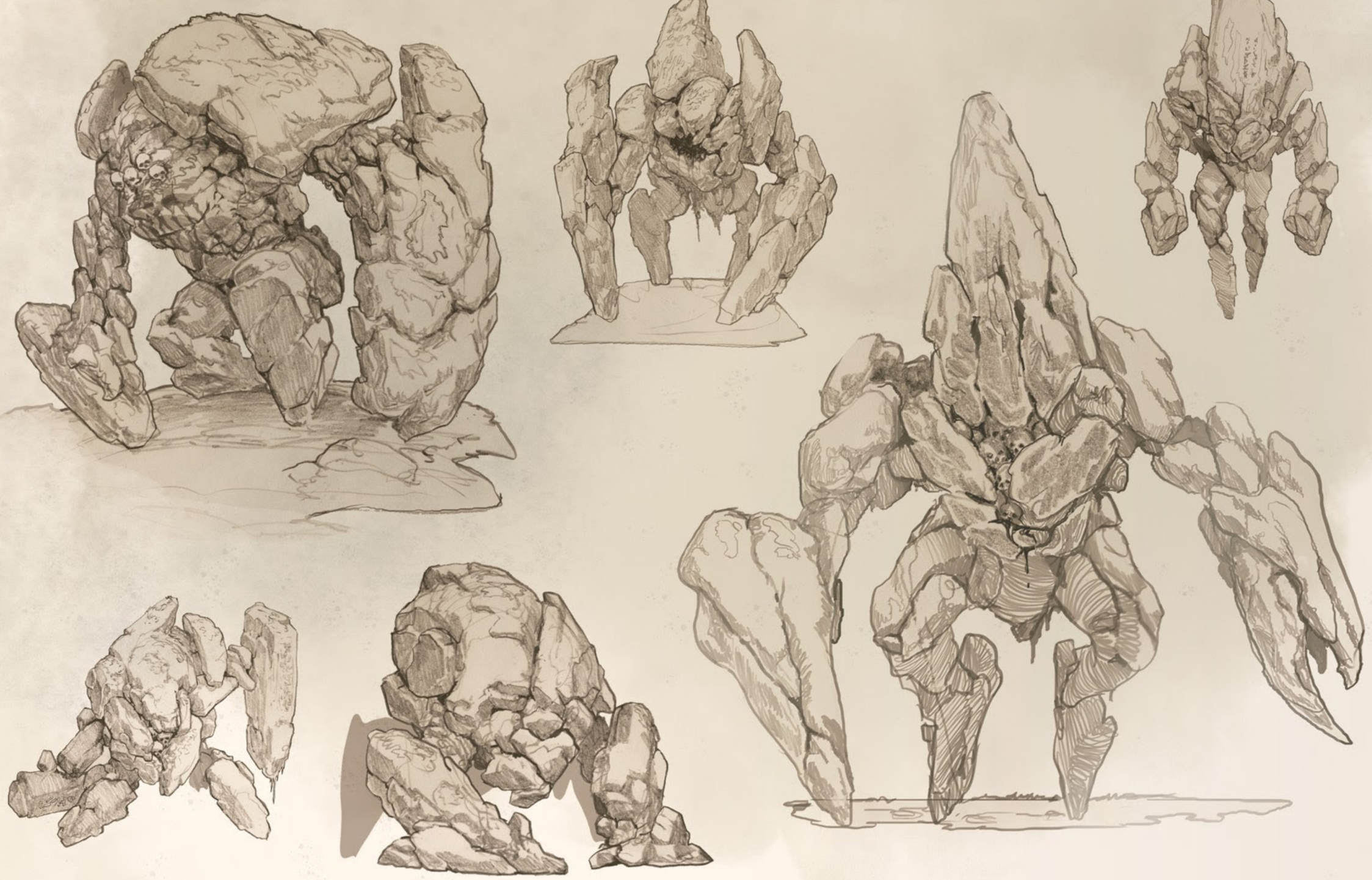
An Ancient in the ice and snow . . . I wonder if they have thoughts like we do? I can't hear any. They don't have mouths or ears . . . none that I can see, anyway. They're mostly pretty peaceful, unless we attack first. I'd never say this to Father, but I wish we could just leave them alone.

MORE NOTES:

We woke this Hel-Walker monster near Thamur's corpse at the Frozen Lake, next to the stalk full of shatter crystals. He was pretty hard to spot in the icy landscape! The Ice Ancient's attacks included a frosty blast, ice missiles, and a beam that slows down whatever it hits.

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core





Lava Ancient

Class: Monster

This Ancient has been underwater for a long time. How does it keep its fire? And why didn't it seek higher ground? Maybe it goes into a kind of hibernation when it's underwater?

MORE NOTES:

After the water in the Lake of Nine dropped a second time, Father and I could reach another area at Veithurgard Pass. That's where we ran into the hibernating Fire Ancient . . . plus a big pack of Draugr. We wasted all the Draugr before focusing on the Ancient, ducking behind big boulders to take cover from its fire missiles and burning beam attacks.

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Soul Eater

Class: Monster

They look almost exactly like Ancients, but there's something. . . off about them. Mother always called the Soul Eaters *"dangerous abominations."* She never said a bad word about *any* living creature (even poisonous bugs!), so her saying that always stuck with me. I wish I could tell her that Father and I killed one.

MORE NOTES:

The Soul Eater was accidentally created by Andvari while experimenting on Ancients down in Völunder Mines. Like the Fire Ancients, it has a rocky, impenetrable skin and attacks with blasts and flaming missiles. But this guy wasn't hibernating like most Ancients—he was just lumbering around and suddenly attacked us when we got close.

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Soul Devourer

Class: Monster

An Ancient whose soul has been removed by dark dwarven magic. It's stronger than a regular Soul Eater, and even *those* still terrify me.

MORE NOTES:

The Soul Devourer is like the Soul Eater, except it uses four attacks: blasts, mortars, missiles, and burning beams. We found him at three locations: the Ruins of the Ancient, the Konùnsgard stronghold, and Niflheim . . . where it hopped out of a realm tear with a pair of Wulvers. That was a tough fight!

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Stone Ancient

Class: Monster

One of the Ancients . . . I can't believe it! Did Mother know they were still alive? They're, well, ancient! Supposedly they're a part of Ymir himself, and they've been around since the beginning of time. I thought they were all in Midgard . . . I wonder why this one is in Alfheim?

MORE NOTES:

The very first Ancient we met was a Stone Ancient. In Alfheim, Father and I were moving through the Ringed Temple trench in order to reactivate the temple's main bridge. At the final platform, a normal-looking rock pile suddenly came to life!

Strengths	Immune to burn, frost, shock, and weaken
Weaknesses	» Stunned by Father's rage » Hurt by attacks that hit its open core

Beast

Ogre

I kind of wish ogres didn't actually exist. There is nothing cool or wondrous about *any* ogre we met. To make things worse, there are two kinds of them.

Ogre — *Class: Monster*

Giant, powerful, angry, but thankfully not very smart, the ogre is one of the ugliest enemies we've fought. Their huge arms give their attacks good range, and they can hit the ground so hard they create powerful shock waves.

This ogre has a very quick tell before he attacks. Father can use that to get out of the way.

Father is strong enough to block one of his attacks, but it takes some time for him to recover. Smarter to avoid it altogether.

MORE NOTES:

After crossing the foothills, Father and I met our first ogre when it burst through the big door at the base of the Mountain. Every ogre is big and strong, and long arms give its punches great range, but its attacks are slow and easy to dodge. And if you hit an ogre's head as he winds up, it disrupts his slam.

For such big guys, ogres are pretty easily stunned. Father dodges his powerful attacks and slides behind the monster for melee hits while I sling arrows. Then Father hops on the stunned ogre's head and either punches it silly or steers it into other enemies.

Strengths	Strong against rage, frost, burn, and axe toss
Weaknesses	You can smell it a mile away!

Fierce Ogre — *Class: Monster*

These ogres are similar in size to the regular ones, but they can cover long distances with a single jump. And . . . they smell *really* bad. I wonder if that's why they're so angry all the time?

If Father can goad an ogre into using their jump smash, it'll take them a couple of moments to recover if they miss. I just hope they miss.

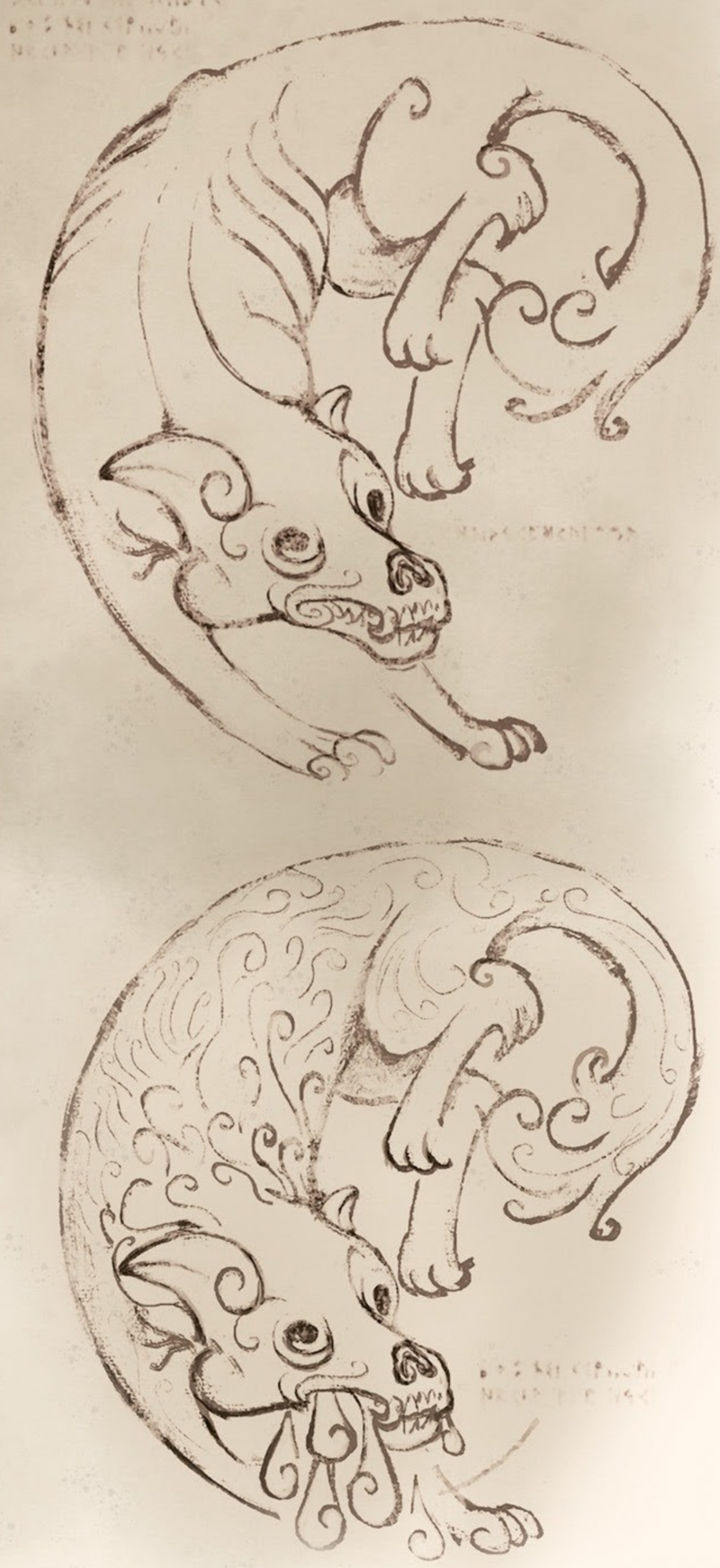
Getting behind an ogre is a good opportunity for Father to do some damage. But if they turn and see him, they'll definitely attack.

MORE NOTES:

The Fierce Ogre can leap really far, then land in a dangerous ground-pounding slam. He also rips big boulders right out of the ground to toss at you (even Father gets dazed for a few seconds when hit by a boulder). Don't let this monster grab you. It really hurts!

Our best bet is to fight the Fierce Ogre from a distance. If I keep my arrows flying at it, then Father can work around behind for some melee punches. If we manage to stun the monster this way, Father can hop on it and pound it or steer it into other foes.

Strengths	Strong against rage, frost, burn, and axe toss
Weaknesses	None



Wolf

With Mother and Father sitting nearby, I used to lie in bed and listen to the night call of wolves. Something about their howls made me sad—I guess because they sounded so hungry. Later, I learned that something bad was happening to the Wildwoods packs. Some were rabid, and others poisoned. Now it makes me even sadder to hear them.

Rabid Wolf

Class: Fodder

I've always admired wolves, but the ones we've encountered attack us on sight, which means they're probably rabid. I guess to them, we are food. I know it's kill or be killed, but still . . . they're beautiful in their own way, and killing them makes me a little sad. Good thing Father probably won't read this.

Wolves typically hunt in packs and will try to surround their prey. Father should try to keep them in front of him and let me help draw their attention.

When these wolves howl, we should be ready for a strong attack.

MORE NOTES:

Rabid Wolves still prowl near our compound in Wildwoods. Their disease causes them to attack on sight. Their deadliest attack—a lunging bite—is fairly easy to evade. Father can counter with an axe combo for quick kills. The best tactic is to keep moving and dodge their attacks with a quick roll move.

Strengths	None
Weaknesses	Weak against rage

Poison Wolf

Class: Fodder

We've seen a lot of aggressive wolves, but these are something else . . . they have some other kind of disease. They spit out a poison that we should avoid walking in, and they're even more aggressive than the rabid ones. I bet we're doing them a favor by putting them out of their misery.

We have to be extra careful not to step in the stuff they vomit up. It's poisonous. Smells real bad, too.

The poison from these wolves makes attacking up close risky. My bow and Father's axe throw are safer ways to take them down.

MORE NOTES:

Poison Wolves move and attack the same way as Rabid Wolves, but those globs of stuff they spit really are toxic, even if you just touch them on the ground! We have to watch our step as we move around these guys.

Strengths	None
Weaknesses	Weak against rage

Wulver

Mother taught me to respect all creatures, even the scary ones that want to eat you. But Wulvers are the angriest beasts of all. I've always sort of *"heard"* what animals are feeling—it's a sound inside my head, like they're talking to me, except it's not exactly talking. And these Wulvers are so full of rage. It's like hearing an explosion! I wonder why they're so angry. We've met two kinds, and I can tell they're really smart beasts. Did they used to be human, and now they're mad that they aren't?

Wulver

Class: Brute

They look like wolves, but they stand upright like humans and are a lot smarter. And stronger. And faster. Their fur is so dense, it makes them tough to put down. They remind me a little of those berserkers that Father put down last summer . . . but wolves instead of bears.

A Wulver's howl is a sign they are going into a frenzy, where they can attack with incredible speed.

If Father finds himself caught in the Wulver's frenzy attack, I may be able to draw the Wulver's attention with a well-placed arrow.

MORE NOTES:

Father says that with Wulvers, it's best to "fight fire with fire." He takes an aggressive approach, hitting hard and fast before they can howl themselves into a frenzy. Because a frenzied Wulver moves so fast it's almost a blur! Luckily, my shock arrows can interrupt a Wulver's howl, stop the frenzy, and stagger the beast. Leviathan's frost effect slows them down too.

Overall, I think it's best to stay on the move against Wulvers to lower the chance of a surprise lunge and grab. They cover ground really fast with their shoulder charge and jump attack, so Father is always ready to dodge them. If his timing is perfect, Father can also parry a Wulver's slashing strike to knock back the beast, and then follow up with a quick counterattack.

Strengths	» High overall resistance » Strong against frost, burn, and rage
Weaknesses	Shock lasts longer

Fierce Wulver

Class: Brute

This looks like an even tougher breed of Wulver. They're smarter, too. Really, really dangerous creatures. Glad my bowstring has some magic in it, otherwise I'm not sure how we'd bring these stronger ones down.

When a Fierce Wulver crouches on all fours, they become very difficult to hit. We need to be on our guard and not leave ourselves open to counterattack.

The other Wulver gets a lot faster after it starts howling. This one seems to get a lot stronger. We should be really, really careful after this one starts howling.

MORE NOTES:

When the Fierce Wulver drops to all fours, it suddenly bursts into a dash attack that comes at you incredibly fast. Better roll sideways quickly! If it lets out a howl, its strength increases a lot. Father always tries to keep these guys in front of him, using Leviathan to slow them down. Meanwhile, I keep my shock arrows flying to weaken and stun them.

Strengths	» High overall resistance » Strong against frost, burn, and rage
Weaknesses	Shock lasts longer

Dark Elves

When we first reached Alfheim, I was so excited to meet real elves after hearing so many of Mother's stories about them. But I quickly learned that elves are both amazing *and* terrible. Right away, we saw Dark and Light Elves trying to slaughter each other! And when the Dark ones turned on us with such fury, I didn't understand why. They didn't even know us! Why did they hate us so much? Were they afraid?

Dark Elf

Class: Grunt

Unlike the Light Elves of Alfheim, the Dark Elves prefer dark places. Maybe that's why they wanted to cover up the Light? They can fly and seem pretty smart and well coordinated—more so than most of the enemies we've fought so far. Their weapons are useful, effective up close and at a distance too. Kind of like Father's axe!

Dark Elves like to attack as a group. When Father lands a heavy hit or parries, it tends to break the swarm.

If we can freeze or weaken the Dark Elves, it will prevent them from using air recoveries when launched.

MORE NOTES:

The winged Dark Elf is so elusive! He likes to swoop in close for quick trident strikes, then dart out of range. He evades melee attacks, dodges our trip attempts, and can even block Father's axe throws. When the Dark Elf's trident glows, it's about to fire explosive projectiles that can knock Father down if they land close enough.

Here's where my talon bow is really useful. Arrows can knock Dark Elves right out of the sky so Father can rush in to stun them with punches. The elves really hate this: they try to pick me up to interrupt my arrow shooting. When this happens, Father always hustles over fast to help!

Strengths	Strong against shock
Weaknesses	» Weak against rage, weaken, barehanded attacks » Weak against arrow strikes

Dark Elf Warrior

Class: Grunt

This type seems stronger than the average Dark Elf. They swing their heavy weapons so hard it creates a shock wave, making their attacks really tough to dodge.

We should watch out for their charge attacks. They can cause temporary blindness. It's hard to fight when you can't see anything!

They are much easier to kill when grounded. Tripping them up seems to work pretty well.

MORE NOTES:

This armored heavy soldier is way tougher than the regular Dark Elf. He hits harder too, thanks to a heavier lance. The Warrior's dash attack ends with a lunging strike that creates a shock wave that's very hard to dodge. Luckily, my arrows can knock Warriors down easily, and once they're grounded, Father can toss Leviathan at their legs to trip them.

The Dark Elf Warrior has one other nasty surprise: when his trident glows, he fires a blast that can temporarily blind you if it hits nearby. If you see it coming, you'd better dodge hard to the side!

Strengths	» Increased resistance » Strong against shock
Weaknesses	» Weak against rage, weaken, barehanded attacks » Weak against arrow strikes

Dark Elf Summoner

Class: Grunt

This one is able to call in reinforcements, so we should take him down quickly. They should be easy to spot, thanks to the bright glow in their wings. I wonder how many Dark Elves there are in Alfheim?

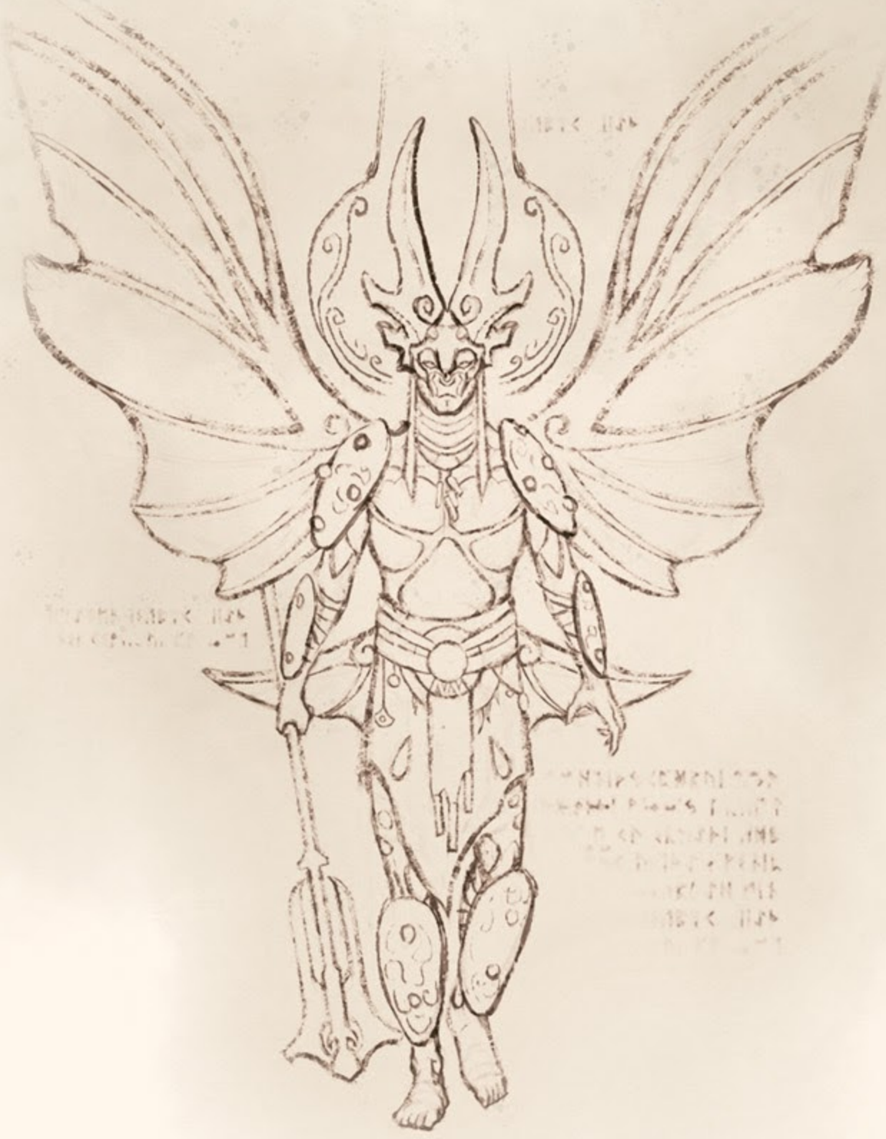
When he spins his weapon, it means he's about to call in more Dark Elves. We should stop him before he slams it into the ground.

He can block axe throws, but if we catch him off guard, Father's heavy axe throw will freeze him and negate his speed.

MORE NOTES:

This Dark Elf has glowing wings and a really bright orange chest rune. He'd be beautiful to look at if he wasn't so cranky and dangerous! The Summoner's fighting moves are like other Dark Elf types except for a special move: he shoots up into the air while spinning his staff, and then slams it to the ground. This summons two Dark Elf minions. The move is showy and takes a few seconds, so we can interrupt it with a Leviathan toss or a few arrows. If I keep firing, I can knock the Summoner to the ground, where Father can freeze him with a heavy axe throw.

Strengths	» Increased resistance » Strong against shock
Weaknesses	» Weak against rage, weaken, barehanded attacks » Weak against arrow strikes



Dark Elf Lord

Class: Brute

Bigger, faster, and stronger than any Dark Elf we've fought so far. Their attacks are so strong they can blind and deafen us for a bit. They fight a lot like regular Dark Elves, just *way* harder.

It's so strong and has thick armor but leaves itself open after certain attacks.

If we can freeze or weaken it, it won't be able to recover in the air when launched or knocked out of aerial attacks.

MORE NOTES:

The Dark Elf Lord's rush attack is a real nightmare. It hits like thunder, breaks Father's guard, and blinds us too! Exploding mortars fired from his glowing staff can inflict blindness as well—and even if the shots miss us, they sit on the ground a few seconds, then detonate if anybody steps on them. If you don't keep circling and dodging this guy, you'll spend much of the fight in darkness, trying to spot Lords looming in the murk around you.

Strengths	» Increased resistance » Strong against shock
Weaknesses	» Weak against rage, weaken, barehanded attacks » Weak against arrow strikes

Draugr

Mother said that Draugr were warriors who died, but their souls were too stubborn and angry to stop fighting. They'd fight off the Valkyrie that came to collect them and bring their own dead bodies back to life . . . warping and twisting their previous form into something else. Now they're husks of their former selves and fight anybody they can find. She also said they can come back in all different shapes and sizes and that some even have powers that others may not.

Draugr are crawling almost everywhere in Midgard. Most can be tripped or launched and have low resistance to being stunned or frosted or shocked—but some can power up parts of their bodies! Whenever we run into these powered-up Draugr, Father and I consider them a priority target—our fighting strategy depends on which kind, of course.

Draugr

Class: Grunt

Draugr fight with dangerous weapons, but they aren't very skilled with them. Not like Father and his axe. If we watch their movements, it should be easy to dodge or block their attacks.

These basic Draugr aren't very fast or strong. We can dodge or block them, and take them down pretty easily.

MORE NOTES:

After many fights, I'm glad these regular Draugr are so skinny, weak, and slow! They're not much of a challenge unless a big bunch swarms and surrounds us. Leviathan slices them up in seconds, and Father's barehanded punches are nearly as deadly. Draugr attacks are also easy to evade or parry.

Quick punches stun each of these goons quickly, and then Father just grabs and rips them apart. It's gruesome, but they deserve it! Sometimes Father knocks one upward and keeps hitting it, juggling it in the air. My arrows make quick work of these guys too.

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost, rage, and . . . well, almost everything!

Heavy Draugr

Class: Grunt

These Draugr seem bigger than the ones we first encountered. They carry heavier, more dangerous weapons. It makes them slower, but they're a *lot* stronger than the regular ones.

It takes a beat for him to recover after swinging . . . if we dodge, he'll be open to a counterattack.

His attacks are so strong, it makes blocking them really hard. Father should probably just dodge them.

MORE NOTES:

The Heavy Draugr is hard to hurt. He swings or pokes his big battle axe with way more power than regular Draugr. In fact, his two-handed swing is so powerful it can break right through Father's block! Luckily, the Heavy's big wind-up is slow. When the goon starts to swing, Father usually does his sweet "dodge and dash" move—a quick evasive roll to the side, then rush in close for a counterattack.

Meanwhile, I pepper the Heavy with arrows, which can stun him or distract him enough to let Father sneak behind him. Father's grab move may not always kill a stunned Heavy Draugr, but it sure hurts a lot. And if the Heavy misses his big overhead swing, his battle axe gets stuck in the ground for a moment. It's kind of comical, and it gives us a chance for a quick counter.

Strengths	» High overall resistance » Strong against fire and rage
Weaknesses	Slightly weak against frost

Shield Draugr

Class: Grunt

I already knew that Draugr weren't just mindless monsters, but I didn't think they were smart enough to use a shield. They like using it, too. We'll have to change up our strategy a bit and see where we can find an opening.

Swinging wildly won't break his guard, but if Father uses his block break move, he should be able to find an opening.

Parrying his attacks can also break his guard.

MORE NOTES:

This rugged Shield Draugr swings the same short sword as the regular Draugr, but he carries a tough bone shield too. It can parry any frontal melee assault and even most ranged attacks, including my arrows! But if Father slings Leviathan at the creature's legs, the axe dips under the shield for a nice knockdown. After Father developed his block break skill, he could use that to stagger these guys too, opening them up to counterattacks.

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Dual-Wield Draugr *Class: Grunt*

A Draugr with two weapons is twice as dangerous, right? When they're with a more defensive enemy, we should consider taking down these Dual-Wield Draugr early in the fight and not turn our backs on them.

These Draugr really know how to use their weapons. We need to be ready for several attacks at once.

With two weapons they like to combo their attacks, but we can disrupt their flow by parrying their hits.

MORE NOTES:

This ugly Draugr is really aggressive. He trades durability for attack power with his twin axes, one in each hand. My arrows can help keep Dual-Wielders off balance so Father can rush in with quick strikes. This Draugr is easy to stun and kill if Father can land good punches, but some of the tougher Dual-Wield Draugr can break Father's guard, then hit him with nasty back-to-back blows! If they start this attack, Father must do his best to dodge or parry.

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Draugr Power-Ups

Some Draugr have learned how to power up their bodies to launch really brutal attacks. Any Draugr type can harness these abilities, and some can even use more than one power-up. When encountered, powered-up Draugr should be our top-priority targets.

Projectile Draugr *Class: Grunt*

These Draugr can shoot fireballs. How do they do that? They like to attack from a distance, which can be really annoying when we're fighting a bunch of other enemies, but luckily they go down pretty quickly.

They can attack from long range, but we should be safe if we dodge or block.

He has to create his projectile before launching it. If either of us can interrupt his attack, he'll have to create it again.

MORE NOTES:

Some Draugr have developed glowing orange arms that can conjure up and toss burning projectiles. Amazing! Fortunately, their tosses can be blocked or evaded pretty easily. Father closes the space fast, rolling sideways to avoid the fireball. Then he kills the thrower with a couple of quick punches.

Another thing we learned: the Projectile Draugr needs a few seconds to light his fireball. So, if we nail him from afar, his process gets interrupted. Here's where I can really help Father—my arrows startle the Draugr and snuff out the fire. Also, Father's awesome countering blast skill works well too, letting him parry their projectiles right back at them!

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Explosive Draugr

Class: Grunt

I'm not sure how they do it, but these Draugr store energy in their bodies, and then explode on contact. But the explosion doesn't hurt them at all! I wonder if it feels good to them? Anyway, we should attack from a distance when we see that they are fully charged up.

We should avoid hitting them with melee attacks when they're powered up—we'll be knocked back by an explosion.

Father should throw his axe at them when they're powered up. They'll explode and damage all nearby enemies.

Strengths	Immune to burn
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Speed Draugr

Class: Grunt

What's more terrifying than a Draugr? A Draugr that can run at you really fast. Mother said some Draugr had special powers, and these ones are able to shoot fire out of their legs and move quickly around the battlefield. We'll need to be on our toes.

These speedy enemies can be hard to hit. Father should wait for them to rush him and parry their attacks.

I see them stomp their feet right before they charge. Should help us spot their incoming attacks.

MORE NOTES:

The Speed Draugr's glowing, powered-up legs give him dizzying bursts of speed. Father finds these guys hard to hit with Leviathan throws as they rush in and out of close range. The key is to watch for the foot stomp, and a blazing dash attack immediately follows! Get ready to parry and counter. My arrows can immobilize Speed Draugr long enough for Father to close the space and hammer them. They're easily stunned if he can get in a few punches.

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Power Weapon Draugr

Class: Grunt

As if the undead trying to kill us with sharp objects wasn't bad enough, some Draugr can channel energy through their arms, charging their weapons and making them even more dangerous. Getting hit with a rusty old sword hurts, but getting hit with a fire-charged sword hurts worse.

They power up their weapon and attack with a forward-moving shock wave.

They have a strong attack, but if we dodge to the side we should be okay.

MORE NOTES:

This Draugr's glowing, powered-up arm sets its sword on fire, then he slams it on the ground to send out a burning shock wave that we can't block. All we can do is dodge! At least if Father can nail the goon with an axe toss during its long power-slam wind-up, the move is interrupted. Then we can rush him, and he'll go down fast and easy.

Strengths	Strong against fire
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and rage

Hel-Walker

Boyhood stories about wild beasts gave me chills, for sure. But Mother's Hel-Walker tales always made me dive right under my bed furs. Hel-Walkers are icy, bluish versions of regular creatures (if you can call Reavers *"regular"*) moving about the realms. These poor souls come straight from Helheim itself! Their lives may be the saddest of all the enemies I've met and felt—so cold and lost!

I was on my first hunt with Father the first time I actually saw a Hel-Walker. It crawled right out of the ground, and I was stunned to see Leviathan's cold blade bounce off him. Every Hel-Walker has that freaky bluish hue that means frost weapons don't hurt them as much. Fortunately, burning weapons hurt Hel-Walkers pretty bad, so Father's Blades of Chaos always work well.

One more thing: every Hel-Walker can sling a wave of frost at you. Better block it or roll sideways fast! If a wave hits, the chill slows you down and drives nearby Hel-Walkers into a frenzy. That's a bad thing—frenzied Hel-Walkers move insanely fast.

Hel-Reaver *Class: Grunt*

First it was a human Reaver. Then we killed it. It died in battle, so shouldn't the Valkyries have taken it to Valhalla? But they didn't . . . it just came back as something else.

Before she died, I overheard Mother telling Father that the Hel-Walkers were returning. Is this what she was talking about? People rising from the dead? Father doesn't seem to know (or care) much about it. Since this thing used to be a Reaver, I'll call them *"Hel-Reavers."*

These enemies become enraged and super aggressive when you're frozen. We should do our best to avoid their frost blast attack.

If these things do manage to freeze us, we should stay on the defensive until it passes.

MORE NOTES:

Hordes of Hel-Reavers swarm in Helheim, but they're crawling up out of the ground in parts of Midgard as well. Those blue faces and cold, lifeless eyes really send a chill down my back. The basic Hel-Walker grunt carries a sword and is pretty tough if you don't have a burning weapon like Father's Blades of Chaos. Hel-Reavers are only a real threat in large groups, but even then, the wide attack radius of Father's Blades makes it easier to deal with many attackers at once.

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage

Hel-Reaver Guard

Class: Grunt

A Hel-Reaver that carries a shield and knows how to use it. I guess they aren't completely mindless after all.

Hel-Walkers with shields can block just about anything, but Father can break their guard with a few well-timed strikes or by bashing them with his shield.

Father should throw his axe at their feet to get around their shields and trip them up.

MORE NOTES:

Hel-Reaver Guards are really dangerous up close. If their frost wave hits us, they follow up with an attack that can daze even Father for a moment. Some of the higher-level Guards are so strong they can break Father's guard with a shield check! Taking out their legs from a distance really is the best tactic.

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage

Hel-Reaver Lord

Class: Grunt

These must've been strong Reavers back when they were alive. Now that they're dead they are even stronger Hel-Reavers.

These enemies will deflect Father's frost axe attacks. He'll have to use his fists instead to stun them.

Hel-Walkers seem to draw their power from the frost, which makes Father's axe pretty weak against them. Good thing he's strong with his fists too. I wish we had a fire weapon.

MORE NOTES:

Obviously, I wrote those notes above before Father had retrieved his awesome Blades of Chaos. Hel-Reaver Lords cover themselves in ice armor that makes Leviathan's attacks totally useless! But we worked out some good team tactics against them: my arrows can stun Lords, while Father works in close to pummel them with barehanded punches.

Strengths	» Strong against frost » Some can reflect *all* axe and frost attacks » Harder to stun with barehanded attacks
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage

Hel-Shadow Archer

Class: Grunt

It's like one of the Shadows, but it uses ice magic like a thrown spear. Must be one of the Hel-Walkers.

Their projectiles are quick but don't stun us. If we rush them, we can take them out of the equation early.

I should be able to help Father with these enemies. Just like their projectiles disrupt his movements, my bow can disrupt theirs.

MORE NOTES:

When Hel-Shadow Archers use ice magic to conjure up their spears, they throw right on target! It takes a quick sidestep to evade them; the timing is tricky. But these guys remind me of a Projectile Draugr—that is, they die fast if Father can get in close and punch them. If my arrows can interrupt their attacks, Father can rush them. I've also seen him counter blasts very effectively; if Father parries just before an ice spear hits, he can bounce it right back at the Archer or redirect it at another foe.

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage

Hel-Shadow Scout

Class: Grunt

It acts like a Shadow but uses ice magic instead of seiðr magic. Definitely a Hel-Walker.

They can cast an ice wall as cover. Father can throw the axe when they pop up behind cover or throw it past them and recall it to hit them from behind.

Their ice walls do more than just provide cover: if we get too close, they can detonate it. We should try to deal with them from range.

MORE NOTES:

My old notes cover Scout tactics pretty well. Like his Archer cousin, the Scout uses Hel's magic to fling ice spears. He can't take a punch very well, so he puts up a sturdy ice barrier to block incoming attacks. The barrier is explosive, so it's better to nail him with arrows and axe throws from a safe distance.

Father also came up with a clever move. He tosses Leviathan just left of the Scout's ice barrier, slides slightly right, then recalls the axe . . . which nails the Scout from behind! I was very impressed. Father seems to rely less on brute strength and raw anger these days. Mother would be pleased (he still doesn't like it when I give him advice though).

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage

Hel-Viken

Class: Brute

It's a Viken, but a dead one. So, a Hel-Viken? This Hel-Walker is just as strong as its seiðr counterpart. Maybe even stronger.

Father can dodge his mace depending on the type of swing. Looks like it's best to dodge horizontal swings backward and vertical swings sideways.

If he misses his overhead attack, his mace gets stuck in the ground to open him up to an attack.

MORE NOTES:

Hel-Vikens are really dangerous brutes. You can't trip or launch them, and they can block Father's axe throws, forcing him to fight them up close. Luckily, the Hel-Viken's mace attacks unwind slowly, so Father usually has time to dodge or roll just outside their range, and then counter fast after the attack whiffs.

Strengths	High overall resistance
Weaknesses	None, except being slow!

Hel-Traveler

Class: Brute

I didn't think the Travelers could get much worse, but it looks like death wasn't enough to keep this one down. In fact, it's even *more* aggressive than the other Travelers we've seen. I guess even Travelers can become Hel-Walkers.

The undead Travelers are more aggressive than the regular ones. Ranged attacks are tricky, because he'll sprint right at us.

We can whittle down his armor if we stay close and dodge his strikes. But when he charges up his sword for an overhead strike, it's time to move!

MORE NOTES:

The Hel-Traveler is more aggressive than regular unfrozen Travelers, and he's tough to interrupt early in the fight. We have to stay on the move and slowly knock his armor off piece by piece! Our attacks hurt him more as his gear drops away, but be careful! If a Hel-Traveler lifts his huge sword and jams it into the ground, a frost wave bursts outward in a circle radiating from the tip. This slows down anyone caught in the range of the attack.

Strengths	Hard to stagger while he's wearing armor
Weaknesses	None that I can see! Have to be patient . . .

Hel-Brood

Class: Grunt

These faceless creatures are very aggressive and don't hesitate to run straight at us. They clearly have the same kind of ice powers we see from anything that comes from Hel. They fall very easily to Father's Blades.

Their air slam attacks can leave us slowed. If they're up in the air, steer clear.

MORE NOTES:

I feel bad for many of the enemies we kill, but not these creepy guys! Hel-Brood run in packs and try to swarm their prey, but Father's Blades of Chaos take them down fast. Sometimes Hel-Brood move so fast they can leap onto Father's back, so he has to shake them off. Just like their Brood cousins, they have a crazy jump attack, slashing downward with their weird arm blades. Plus, they explode when they die. So we've learned to keep our distance, keep moving, and pick them off one at a time whenever possible.

Strengths	Attack in nasty swarms!
Weaknesses	» Weak against Father's rage, knockback, and runic attacks » Easy to stun

Hel-Revenant

Class: Brute

Like the other Hel-Walkers, the Hel-Revenant attacks with ice that can slow us down. Mother used to tell me bedtime stories about the Revenants, but she never mentioned this kind. Maybe she thought it was too scary for me.

The Hel-Revenant's icy fissure attacks damage and freeze Father. We'll have to avoid them if we want to be able to take her down.

We can either interrupt, outrun, or dodge her ice-breath attack—it can freeze Father and leave him idle and vulnerable to attacks.

MORE NOTES:

Something about Hel-Revenants really makes my skin crawl—their spooky chants maybe, or their ugly cracked and blue faces. The frozen hag's ice breath can freeze you in place . . . and if that happens, her follow-up attacks can actually shatter *you if you don't shake yourself loose quickly! Her ground-rake swing sends a row of ice shards that tracks your movement for a few seconds, hurting and slowing you down if you don't dodge. As with all Revenants, Hel-Revenants have a protective magical shroud. But my arrows can dissolve it, letting Father get in close to punch her silly.*

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	Weak against Father's rage and burn

Nightmare

All of the Nightmare variants are weak fodder types, easy to pop. But each type has a nasty surprise. For example, the Ice Nightmare is a Hel-Walker creature who spits ice, and the Gloom Nightmare is a Dark Elf creature that can blind you!

Nightmare

Class: Fodder

Mother used to tell me stories about Nightmares, until, well . . . I started having nightmares. I was embarrassed, but she said they were just another part of life, and sometimes there was *"beauty in the horror."* She always saw the upside to everything, even these creepy little floating eye monsters. They're named after an older creature, called a Mare, that sits on your chest while you sleep and feeds off your fear.

These Nightmares come after me and try to take me out of the fight, but Father can stop them. Hopefully he will.

We can either dodge their shots or interrupt them with an arrow or axe throw. The stronger ones can shoot faster.

ADDITIONS:

Nightmares like to hover just out of reach of our melee attacks while launching poisonous spit at us. My arrows are really good at knocking them lower, where we can whack them; Father's axe throws work too, but Nightmares are so nimble they can be hard to hit. Once Father got his Blades of Chaos, he learned he could impale the fliers then fling them at other enemy targets. Nightmares explode when they hit! I have to admit, it's kind of fun to turn such an irritating enemy into a bomb like that.

Strengths	Nothing in particular . . . tough to hit
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Exploding Nightmare

Class: Fodder

These Nightmares like to swarm in close and then explode. Why do they sacrifice themselves like this? Maybe they are all part of some kind of hive mind. Whatever the reason, it's really annoying.

As soon as they start charging us, just one hit to their body will blow them up. The explosion hurts other enemies too! Could be useful when fighting a big group.

They'll explode if they get too close to us. We need to hit them at range.

If multiple Exploding Nightmares are grouped together, taking down one of them will set off an explosion that kills them all.

MORE NOTES:

Like I said, hitting these nuisances from a distance with my arrows is the key to success. Father probably wouldn't agree; sometimes I think he'd rather just let them explode in his face than take my advice in combat.

Strengths	None . . . easy to kill
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Fire Nightmare

Class: Fodder

These Nightmares shoot fireballs. As if we needed *more* reasons to hate Nightmares.

Father throws his axe at them to freeze them and bring them down to earth. My arrows can stun them, which will allow Father to finish them off. If he grabs them when stunned, he can throw them at other enemies, and they'll explode!

MORE NOTES:

Fire Nightmares are like other Nightmares, except they shoot fireballs. Father can hit them with a quick axe throw, or use his Blades of Chaos to snag and fling them like a firebomb. I try to keep a sharp eye out and warn him when projectiles come, because you can't always hear when sneaky Nightmares spit those burning missiles. I mean, Father can absorb a lot of punishment—sometimes I think he sort of likes it. But it's wearing him down, and I can help him avoid some of it at least

Strengths	Sneaky
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Nightmare Parasite

Class: Fodder

It looks like this type of Nightmare can actually possess other creatures and make them stronger. Does the possessed creature have any control over their actions, or are they just trapped in some horrific waking nightmare? Not a very nice thought.

These Nightmares try their hardest to possess other enemies, making those enemies a lot stronger. If we stun or kill a possessed enemy, it will force the possessing Nightmare out of their body.

MORE NOTES:

Somehow, this spooky Nightmare dives inside *another enemy and takes over its mind! The Parasite controls the possessed creature and also makes it stronger, but the Nightmare pops back out once the host is killed or stunned. When that happens, move fast—you have to kill the pest before it can take over another foe.*

Strengths	None, physically
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Ice Nightmare

Class: Fodder

These Nightmares can use the same power of frost that we've seen the Hel-Walkers use. These attacks will slow us down if they manage to hit us.

They'll look straight up before firing their ice projectile, so we should either get out of the way or hit them with Father's axe (or my arrows).

When Father throws his axe at Nightmares, it knocks them closer to the ground. Then he can use melee attacks to finish them off.

MORE NOTES:

This Nightmare's ice missiles freeze and slow you down if they strike. Watch for the creature to look up just before it spits a missile. When you see it, get ready to roll out of the way! My arrows knock all fliers down so Father can smash them before they take off again. As with other Nightmare types, Father can use his Blades of Chaos to snag and toss them so they explode like ice bombs.

Strengths	None
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Gloom Nightmare

Class: Fodder

These Gloom Nightmares can blind us for a little bit. Just when I thought Nightmares couldn't get any worse . . .

Father can hit them twice on the same axe throw—once on the throw and again on the recall.

They make good target practice for me and my bow. A couple of arrows would probably bring them down.

MORE NOTES:

We ran into this nasty flying minion of the Dark Elves in the Alfheim temple. They spit stuff that not only hurts but also messes up our vision. Luckily, just a couple of my arrows can pop each critter into a yellow spray. Father's blades can spear and fling them like bombs too.

Strengths	None to write home about
Weaknesses	» Weak against shock and Father's rage » Easy to stun

Seiðr

Seiðr is powerful magic . . . *very* powerful. Seiðr infuses certain creatures, and Mother always said that it isn't good or bad, but that it can be used for good or bad purposes. All I know is that we ran into a lot of creatures skilled in seiðr magic, and all of them tried to kill us. So I'm not too thrilled about seiðr beings, to be honest.

Even our friend Freya, queen of the Vanir . . . well, she's pretty mad at us for killing her son—even though it saved her life—so maybe she's not exactly a *"friend"* anymore, but I still like her a lot . . . Anyway, Freya is one of the great masters of seiðr magic, maybe the greatest. She uses her magic for good, mostly. She saved her friend Hildisvíni, the wild boar; she brought Mimir's head back to life; and she cured my sickness too. All with seiðr magic.

But then, Freya also reanimated the humongous giant stonemason Thamur and tried to squish us like bugs when she got mad! That was pretty scary. So I guess how you use seiðr depends on what mood you're in and how angry you are at everything. Again, all the beings in this section used their magic to attack us. I wonder: if I learned seiðr magic, could I teach other creatures to use it for good?

Brood

Class: Fodder

These things are a complete mystery. They always show up in groups, but at least they go down fairly easily. They don't have weapons, but they can grow their limbs into sharp points that are just as dangerous. They also tend to try to latch on to Father, and they use their greater numbers to overwhelm us.

They can poison us, and we need to be extra careful of their leaping attack.

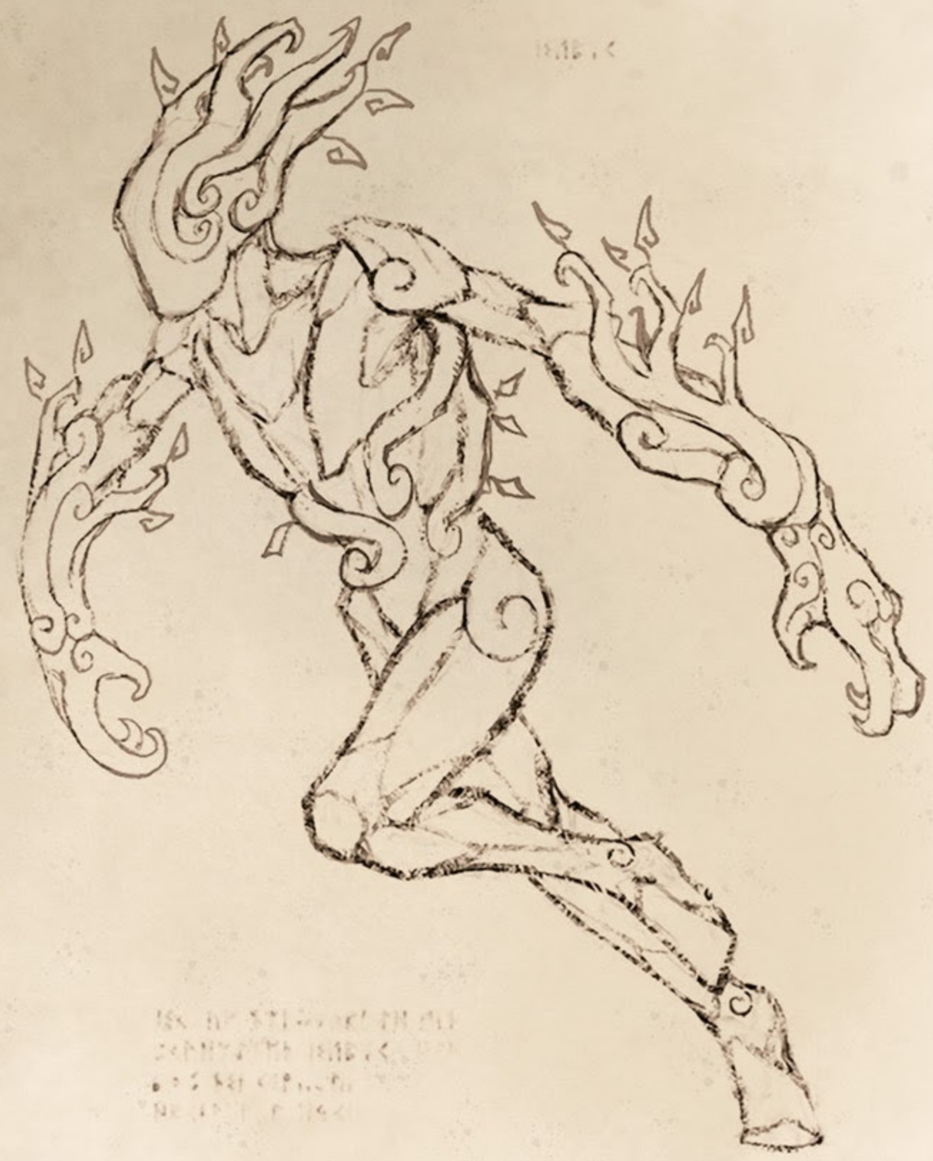
The Brood explode when they die. We can use this to damage and knock away any nearby enemies.

MORE NOTES:

These Brood swarmlings are small and weak, but they're really agile and they travel in hissing packs. Their main move is a leaping somersault attack that ends with a downward slash of their spear-like forearms. Brood also try to flank Father for a sneaky flying leap onto his back for a chokehold.

Father's Blades of Chaos aren't as effective against these seiðr Brood as they are against Hel-Brood, but the wide slashing radius helps manage the pack better. Our best tactic is to back away and keep them at range, then lure them out one by one. Careful! When dying Brood start shuddering, they soon explode in a poisonous cloud. Roll away fast!

Strengths	Attack in large numbers
Weaknesses	» Weak against Father's rage and knockback » Easy to stun



Legion

Class: Grunt

Freya always seems to have more and more magic up her sleeve. First, she used her roots to try to restrain Father and Baldur, but they were too strong. Then she reanimated Thamur, the Giant Stonemason! That was incredible, but it still didn't work. Baldur kept trying to kill Freya, and we couldn't let that happen. So we kept fighting, and Freya summoned these weird creatures. They kept trying to grab Father to keep him from fighting. Luckily, they go down easily. There sure were a lot of them though . . .

MORE NOTES:

Legion are similar to Brood: they only appear in big packs and like to jump on Father. Like Brood, they also go down very easily, but they can be pretty annoying if you don't kill them quickly. We only fought Legion at a couple of places.

Strengths	Attack in large numbers
Weaknesses	» Weak against Father's rage and knockback » Easy to stun

Reaver

Class: Grunt

These were just normal human Reavers once, but they look like they've been corrupted by seiðr magic. When did this start happening?

Seiðr Reavers are able to heal, so if we start attacking one, we should try to finish the job quickly. When they die, they detonate in a poison cloud. If we're too close, we should try to dodge away.

MORE NOTES:

Reavers aren't much of a match against Leviathan, but when their health is low, they raise their arms to conjure up healing seiðr magic. You have to keep hitting the same guy until he's dead. Some Reavers carry shields too, making them tougher to kill, but Father can knock them backward with his own shield or throw his axe at their legs to knock them to the ground.

Strengths	Nothing special
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and Father's rage

Poison Revenant

Class: Brute

Mother once told me that some witches trade little bits of their soul here and there to become more powerful in seiðr magic. Eventually, they lose every part of their humanity and become Revenants. They can disappear in an instant, and these particular Revenants are able to spread poison through touch and breath.

Their pestilence powder leaves poison hazards in the environment, and Father will be poisoned if he steps in them. Their fissure attack can move around obstacles to hit us, and Father has a better chance of dodging if he waits until the attack is closer.

MORE NOTES:

The crazy chant of the first seiðr witch I met had me so spooked I could hardly move! Her fluttery shroud is magic, and it lets her teleport around us; Father says she "slips between sheets of reality." Revenants are almost impossible to beat unless we work together as a team, because Father can't hit her without my help. My arrows dissolve the witch's shroud for a few seconds, and then Father can rush in and hammer the old shrew with a barehanded combo.

Strengths	When shrouded, invincible to Father's attacks *and* hard to stun with my arrows!
Weaknesses	» Weak against Father's rage » My arrows take down her shroud

Summoner Revenant

Class: Brute

This kind of Revenant can actually summon Nightmares. Does she create them with her seiðr magic, or are they all just squeezed together in her pack? I wonder how so many of them fit in that little pack.

She'll keep trying to summon Nightmares, so we need to make sure we interrupt her to avoid being overrun by them.

Her powder smokescreen clouds can blind us, and they provide cover for her follow-up attacks. We should avoid them as much as we possibly can.

MORE NOTES:

This revolting Revenant spews blinding mist and summons a bunch of Nightmares. After conjuring four fliers, however, she can't summon any more until all four are killed. We learned that we should start the fight by killing three (and only *three*) *Nightmares; then we ignore or evade that last one, keeping it alive while we focus all attacks on the Revenant. Pretty nifty plan, eh?*

Strengths	When shrouded, invincible to Father's attacks *and* hard to stun with my arrows!
Weaknesses	» Weak against Father's rage » My arrows take down her shroud

Shadow

Class: Grunt

These were human Reavers, but now that they've embraced the ways of the seiðr, they can throw magic spells at a distance. They only attack after they've conjured an explosive seiðr magic spell. We should rush them before they can throw it, or we should try to dodge it.

If they do create their bomb, Father can disrupt them by throwing his axe before they have time to throw it.

MORE NOTES:

Watch these guys carefully to keep track of their main move. Each Shadow conjures a seiðr projectile in his right hand and flings it at us after a short pause. The key is to strike during the pause to interrupt the attack. An arrow or light axe throw does the trick nicely. Another neat trick: Father can counter to parry the bomb right back at the Shadow.

Strengths	Nothing special
Weaknesses	Weak against frost and Father's rage

TATZELWURM

Tatzelwurms are funny creatures. They're so vicious, and yet it seems like they're having fun, swimming and leaping out of the ground like it's water! If I could just listen to one calmly for a minute, I bet I could figure out why it's so angry, and then tame it. A Tatzelwurm would be a great companion on a journey, but Father only knows how to fight things, not listen to them. Too bad.

Tatzelwurm *Class: Fodder*

A Tatzelwurm is part lizard, part cat—a lizard-cat! Or a cat-lizard . . . or something. Either way, the combination is pretty weird. They like to burrow underground to close the distance between them and their prey. Their claws and teeth are extremely sharp, but it's that poisonous barb on their tails that we really need to watch out for.

When Father throws his axe at a Tatzelwurm as it burrows toward him, it'll pop it out of the ground.

Launching and attacking Tatzelwurms as they dig into the ground will stop them from burrowing for a short time.

MORE NOTES:

Father can slam the ground to pop any nearby Tatzelwurm out of its burrow; then he knocks it into the air and juggles it with hit after hit to keep it from digging in again. If an underground Tatzelwurm makes a burrowing run at us, we back away until it leaps out, then Father parries its attack to stagger the beast. My shock arrows can really zap Tatzelwurms too. The shock doesn't hurt them much, but it keeps them immobilized so Father can hammer them.

Strengths	Strong against arrow damage
Weaknesses	Easy to zap with shock arrows . . . and the shock lasts for a while!

Cursed Tatzelwurm *Class: Fodder*

This Tatzelwurm doesn't have the poisonous barb, but it does have a sac in its throat that lets it barf poison at us. I know—it's really gross. The poison is deadly to the touch, so even if we dodge the attack, we still need to be careful not to step in it. Their spit is highly poisonous, even on the ground.

Father's axe throws will freeze them and keep them from burrowing underground.

MORE NOTES:

We use the same tactics as against the regular Tatzelwurm, but I learned to watch this guy's mouth carefully! Poison spews out right before the Cursed Tatzelwurm spits, so you get a heads-up for timing your dodge. Be careful not to step in the poisoned barf, even if you dodge the initial spit.

Strengths	Strong against arrow damage
Weaknesses	Easy to zap with shock arrows . . . and the shock lasts for a while!

TRAVELER

All Travelers are truly frightening. We've never faced an enemy who seems so calm before the fight. Sometimes they just kneel there, leaning on their gigantic swords, waiting. It's pretty unnerving. I can tell that Father has a lot of respect for Travelers—I guess because they're pure warriors, like him. I wish we could convince them to fight on our side instead of against us. But Father would never try talking to a foe first. That's not his style.

Traveler *Class: Brute*

They wear really strong armor, have huge swords, and are one of the toughest enemies we've faced. Who are they, and what do they want with us? Mother never mentioned the Travelers. I hope we don't have to fight too many of them.

He is slow but very sturdy. We should dodge his horizontal swings backward and his vertical swings sideways and attack him while he's recovering.

The Traveler has a magical rune. If we see him lift it in his hand, Father should throw his axe at it.

MORE NOTES:

Travelers really do move slowly across the field, and their attacks are easy to see coming. But they're so powerful! My arrows barely chip away at their tough armor, and Father's big melee strikes hardly do better. But as we knock off pieces of his armor, hits start to hurt him more. You really *have to be patient.*

Watch out when a Traveler lifts up his magical rune! If we let him slam it down to the ground, a really painful shock wave goes out in a circle. Luckily, a light axe throw can interrupt this move. Whenever we defeat a Traveler, he drops rare resources that we can deliver to Brok or Sindri to craft a special armor set.

Strengths	Armor is very strong against axe throws and bestows strong resistance against elements
Weaknesses	None, really. What a warrior!

Traveler Champion

Class: Brute

This Traveler has a huge shield on his back, which makes breaking through his extremely tough armor even tougher.

We'll have to watch for him to turn and attack before striking him from the front.

MORE NOTES:

That shield really is impenetrable! But Father came up with a neat tactic when the Champion backs toward us. He tosses Leviathan just to the knight's left, slides slightly to the right, and recalls it. The returning axe hits the Traveler's front side! I love that trick.

One more thing: The Champion has a thrust attack that can cause very *serious pain. He slides forward from his defensive stance, spins around, and lunges straight ahead, thrusting his sword at Father's gut. But afterward the Champion needs a few seconds to recover, so if Father can dodge the stab, he has a nice window for a counterattack.*

Strengths	Immune to damage from behind
Weaknesses	I've got *nothing* on this . . .

Viken

Class: Brute

These big seiðr Reavers like to use two-handed maces when they fight. Mother always referred to them as *"Vikens,"* for some reason.

We need to kill these guys quickly; they're able to heal from most wounds. We should also watch out when they power up their weapon with seiðr magic. They can do a powerful triple slam attack.

MORE NOTES:

Vikens are brutal seiðr warriors. They can't be tripped or launched, and they can block ranged attacks to make Father fight them up close. But they move slowly and take a long time to wind up their attacks, so the key is to evade them, get just outside the Viken's range, then counter after his swing misses.

Like I said in my old notes, watch for Vikens to power up their mace. Hits with a powered mace can hurt really bad, plus they follow up with three successive ground slams. Keep your distance until the move is finished, then move in for a quick combo counter.

Strengths	Immune to damage from behind
Weaknesses	I've got *nothing* on this . . .

Dauði Kaupmaðr

Class: Monster Tribe: Fire Troll

I think the troll we just fought was Dauði Kaupmaðr. Mother used to always tell me stories about him to try to scare me if I wandered off too far. I think she'd be proud of me, but Father thinks because I got a little angry that I'm not ready. Whatever. I just helped him kill a troll—I know I'm ready!

Mother told me a lot of stories about trolls. This one's name translates to *"Death Merchant."* With a name like that, I think it's safe to assume he was pretty evil. I'm glad we killed him.

MORE NOTES:

This was the first troll fight as a team. We ran into Dauði Kaupmaðr not far from home in Wildwoods. I'd never seen anything *so big before. I was scared, but also angry. I actually kind of lost it after the fight. Like I said in my old entry, Father told me I wasn't ready to leave home and fulfill Mother's wish yet. I'm sorry to say that only made me angrier. But now I understand why he wanted me to control my fury. Anger leads to bad decisions.*

Strengths	Highly resistant to elemental effects
Weaknesses	Weak against my arrows

Troll

Trolls are huge, disgusting, foul-smelling monsters. Their species is divided into tribes: Fire, Lava, Frost, Ice, and Stone. Each troll carries a massive stone pillar called a totem that he swings and slams. Troll attacks are *extremely* powerful but, luckily, also slow. We take advantage of this by evading their strikes, rushing in fast for a combo, then rolling away quickly when the troll tries to stomp us with its foot.

Brenna Dauði

Class: Monster Tribe: Lava Troll

This is the second troll we've seen so far. I had no idea they were so close to our house! They've never bothered us before, but I guess we never bothered them either. Mother said if I ever saw a troll, I should run the other way. Guess she never said that to Father.

MORE NOTES:

We met this troll after I shot Freya's boar friend, Hildisvíni, and tracked him through River Pass. Brenna Dauði threw lava at us, which wasn't too pleasant. Father found a rock formation in the river to shield himself from the troll's burning shots, then nailed the monster repeatedly from afar with Leviathan. My arrows helped a bit, but I wasn't nearly as good then as I am now.

Strengths	Highly resistant, especially to frost and burn
Weaknesses	None. What a monster!

Dauði Hamarr

Class: Monster Tribe: Fire Troll

We found Dauði Hamarr trapped in a cage in Veithurgard. The dwarf king had managed to capture him somehow. Why was he in this cage? We could have just let him rot down there, but that felt too cruel . . . even for a troll.

MORE NOTES:

Liberating and fighting Dauði Hamarr wasn't strictly necessary, but he sure dropped a lot of valuable loot! Beating him also gave us access to a nice chest with great stuff inside.

Strengths	Highly resistant, especially to frost and burn
Weaknesses	None.

Grendel Of The Ashes

Class: Monster Tribe: Fire Troll

This must have been the other Grendel's brother? Or maybe *"the Ashes"* is a different kind of title that the Fire Trolls use to honor each other. There's so much we don't know about trolls, but I guess the most important thing to know is that they are all trying to kill us, so we have to kill them first. That's what Father would say, anyway.

MORE NOTES:

Grendel of the Ashes stood guard inside Týr's Vault with his "opposite twin," Grendel of the Frost. Both were just statues when we arrived, but when we tried to snag the Black Rune, both trolls came to life to defend the treasure. Grendel of the Ashes' resistance to fire was strong, but he was extremely vulnerable to frost, so Leviathan cut him down eventually.

Strengths	Immune to Blades of Chaos
Weaknesses	Weak against Leviathan.

Death Eater

Class: Monster Tribe: Stone Troll

Like the two Grendel trolls, this one also started as a statue, standing guard on the beach next to Helheim Tower on the Lake of Nine. Once we found the Black Rune inside Týr's Vault and defeated both Grendels, the Death Eater awakened and started patrolling the length of the beach.

Strengths	Highly resistant, especially to frost and burn
Weaknesses	None

Grendel Of The Frost

Class: Monster Tribe: Stone Troll

Grendel of the Frost was the stuff of legend. Even Mother thought he was just a myth. It was said that Grendel was the strongest and most feared among the Stone Troll Tribe. They hold the name *"the Frost"* in the highest regard and only give it to someone who is to be honored and revered. And now he's dead. Serves him right for trying to kill us!

MORE NOTES:

Like I mentioned before, Grendel of the Frost stood guard inside Týr's Vault with Grendel of the Ashes. Frost's immunity to frost weapons made Leviathan useless against him. But he doesn't like burning weapons very much; Father's Blades of Chaos sliced him up after a long, hard fight.

Strengths	Immune to Leviathan
Weaknesses	Weak against Blades of Chaos

Járn Fótr

Class: Monster Tribe: Ice Troll

Mother said this troll lived in the heart of the Mountain with the giants, but there was a falling-out one day, and they cast him out. Makes sense to me; I wouldn't want to live with a troll. Guess he moved back in when they left.

MORE NOTES:

We ran into Járn Fótr inside the Mountain while looking for a way up the central cave shaft. He was a Hel-Walker who shared similar moves to the trolls we fought at Wildwoods and River Pass. His massive ice totem could freeze and slow his foes, so we kept our distance. We also had to keep dodging the icy fissures that shot out at us when he stamped his feet!

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	None

Dauði Munr

Class: Monster Tribe: Fire Troll

We killed this one while trying to restore the Jötunheim Tower to the Lake of Nine in all the realms. When the doors opened to Muspelheim, I guess he wanted to see what was happening. Why is every troll's first and only instinct to attack?

MORE NOTES:

Beating Dauði Munr was doubly tough because he lumbered into the Jötunheim Tower with a huge ogre too! First, we stunned the ogre. Then Father hopped onto its head and steered the big freak into the troll. Clever move! After that, my arrows and Leviathan (very effective against Fire Trolls) helped stagger them both. Then Father went into a rage and finished the job.

Strengths	Strong against Blades of Chaos and fire attacks
Weaknesses	Weak against Leviathan

Stonebeard King

Class: Monster Tribe: Ice Troll

Mother said Stonebeard King earned the title of *"king"* simply because no one could take it from him. If you are arrogant enough to call yourself a king, you'd better be able to back it up, and Stonebeard could. He never lost a fight . . . until now.

MORE NOTES:

Stonebeard King was frozen into a wall of ice inside the banquet hall under Thamur's corpse. Father lodged a shatter crystal in the wall, and I loosed a shock arrow at it to smash the ice and free the Hel-Walker monster. This Ice Troll had similar moves to Járn Fótr, with a foot stomp that sent out a frost fissure along the ground and freezing attacks that slowed us when we got hit.

Strengths	Strong against frost
Weaknesses	None

Elite

Like I said earlier, we already beat all of these ridiculously powerful elite foes. None of them are coming back, so it's no use writing up any combat tips. The Valkyries are free spirits now. Even the three Asgardian gods we fought are dead! And believe me, it's not easy to kill a god.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not bragging. We almost lost to some of these guys. They fought unbelievably hard, and Father had to face some of them without much help from me. His Mountain dragon battle was so epic I think all of Midgard was shaking—all I could do was watch. And I never even met the Hel's guardian troll, Máttugr Helson; Father had to go down to Helheim Gate and fight him alone.

But in the end, we won, and they lost. I'm just listing them here because . . . well, they deserve to be mentioned. Mother always said that the world is amazing and wild, and things that rise up to rule the wild deserve your respect. Even if they try to kill you.

Baldur

Son of Odin and Freya

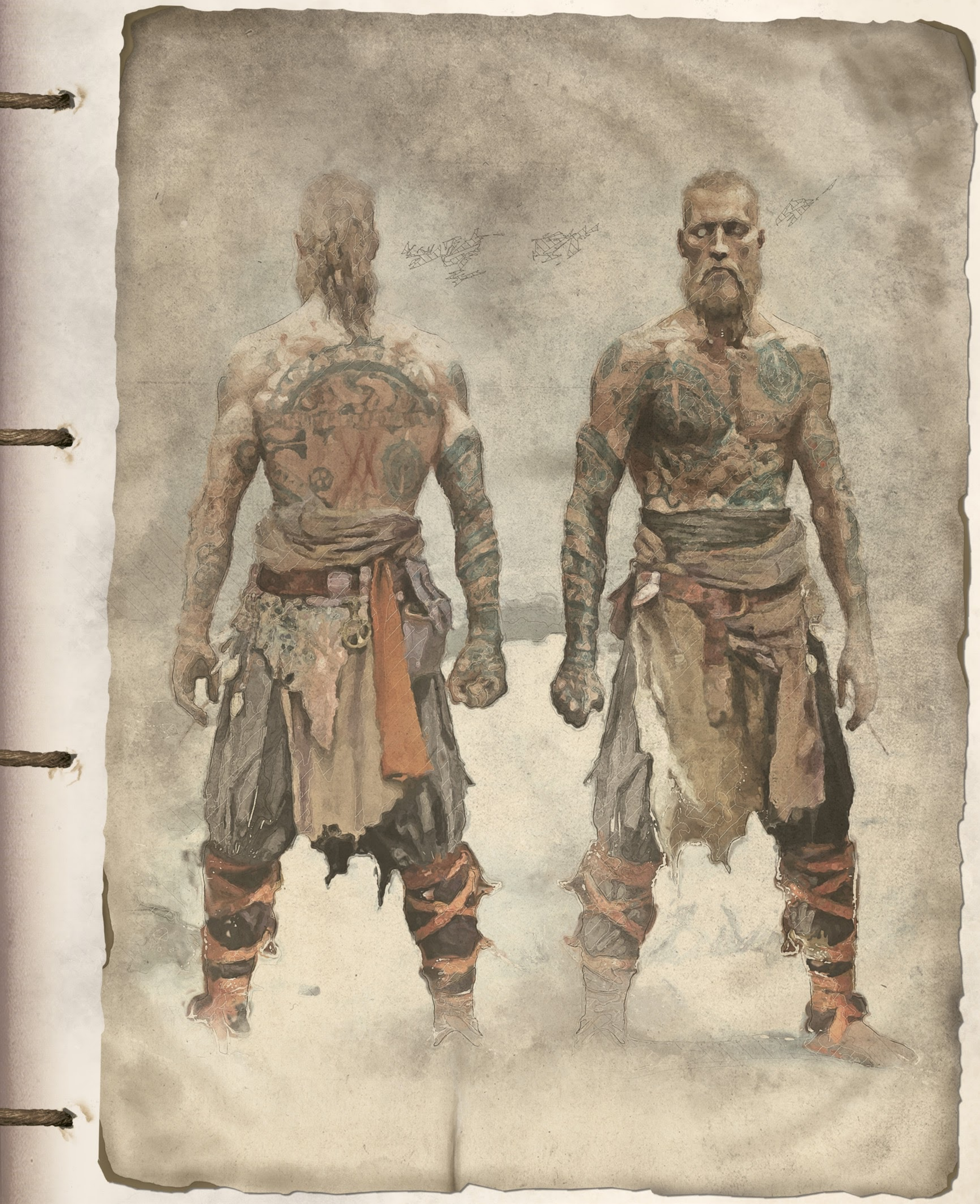
Baldur. He's one of the Aesir. Odin's son, Thor's brother. He came to our house and fought Father, and Father killed him . . . or so we thought. Supposedly he can't feel pain, and now he's hunting us with his nephews, but we don't know why.

MORE NOTES:

Later, we learned that Baldur was Freya's son, too. He was angry because she used seiðr magic to make him invincible when he was born. Freya thought it was a blessing, but Baldur called it a curse. He couldn't feel anything!

We also learned that Odin sent Baldur with Thor's sons, Magni and Modi, to find a warrior giant he'd heard was living in Wildwoods. Baldur naturally figured it was Father, but it was actually Mother! Mimir says that Odin believes the Jötnar are the agents of Ragnarök—the great final battle said to end all things. Odin apparently thinks he can stop the apocalypse if he kills off all the giants. He's been paranoid ever since the giants disappeared, that they've amassed an army in Jötunheim, just waiting for Ragnarök so they can kill him. But he figured he needed a giant to help him get there and finish what he and Thor started.

Anyway, we had to keep fighting Baldur until Father finally killed him by the river landing near Thamur's corpse when one of my braided mistletoe arrows broke Freya's invincibility spell. We had no choice—Baldur was trying to strangle Freya! Even if I didn't like Freya as much as I do, that really upset me. How could someone hate his own mother like that?



Gullveig

The Desecrated Maiden

A spirit convinced me that Gullveig, a powerful witch that was killed a long time ago, could reunite us with Mother. Father didn't believe him. I shouldn't have either . . . but it seemed like we should give it a try for a chance to see Mother again, right?

Once we collected all her bones, Gullveig was resurrected. Then she made it clear that she'd reunite us . . . in death! She attacked us, and we killed her (obviously), but I was really upset with myself. How could I fall for such an obvious lie? Father said to take it as a lesson, so that's what I'm gonna do. No more trusting spirits.

Hræzlyr

The Mountain Dragon

I can't believe it . . . Father just killed a dragon! I've never seen him fight like that before. I mean, I know he's really strong and all, but this thing was huge! The dragon's name was Hræzlyr, which is sort of like the word for *"terror."* It's an appropriate name too—he's vicious, ugly, and shoots lightning out of his mouth. Luckily, Father was able to find some Yggdrasil tree-sap crystals, and he used them to stun Hræzlyr. Then he stabbed a big crystal into his throat! There was a big explosion, and down went the dragon. I'm still shaking from the excitement, but Father doesn't even seem fazed. Does he ever get scared?

Magni and Modi

Sons of Thor

Magni is the older son of Thor. He had a huge sword, could use the power of lightning, and was really mean. Father killed him.

Modi is the younger son of Thor, and a relentless creep. He also can shoot lightning, and uses a mace and shield. He ran off after Father killed his brother, Magni, but I bet we haven't seen the last of him. I'll kill him next time I see him.

MORE NOTES:

Like I said, Magni and Modi were sent by Odin to kill us. They finally got the chance under Thamur's corpse, at the glowing tip of his magic chisel. Magni had a huge lightning sword, but Father buried the Leviathan Axe right between his eyes, so Modi ran off. Later, when Modi snuck up on us at Týr's vault, he mocked Mother, which made me lose control so bad that my sickness returned. I never *hated anyone so much as I hated that guy.*

When we saw Modi again just inside the Mountain, he was half dead because his own dad, Thor, had mashed him to a pulp. I didn't care. I felt cold inside—filled with hate—and I wanted revenge. I felt a rush when I stuck my knife in his neck and kicked him off a cliff. At first it felt kind of good, but Father was not happy with me.

. . . Now I feel terrible when I remember it. Mother would have been so disappointed. I let her down.

Máttugr Helson

Helheim Bridge Keeper

Máttugr Helson is also known as Helheim's son and bridge keeper. Apparently he was actually born and raised in Hel. Growing up in a troll tribe can't be an easy life, but growing up in Hel must be even worse.

MORE NOTES:

When I got sick in Týr's vault, Father took me straight to Freya. She told him she needed Máttugr Helson's heart to save me. I remember him from Mother's stories—she called him "the Son of Hel." Born and raised in Helheim, Máttugr guarded the Bridge of the Damned for a long, long time. His job was to make sure only the dead passed through the gate. Because I was so sick, Father had to go fight him alone.

Father told me about the battle afterward. Máttugr was a powerful Ice Troll capable of creating magical orbs with the totem he carried. Father said these orbs slowly tracked Máttugr's foes, then exploded if they made contact. He said Hel's son shared similar moves to lesser trolls, but could also summon Hel-Brood to the fight and teleport around the arena too. I wish I could have been there to help!

I think Father actually felt a bit of remorse about slaying Helheim's guardian and cutting out his heart. I mean, the guy was just doing his job, right?

Svartáljǫfurr

Dark Elf King

We just killed the Dark Elf king that's been harassing us this whole time. I thought I'd feel good about that, but . . . just before he died, he said the Light Elves were the bad guys. Could that be true? What if we've been fighting against the good guys this whole time? The Light Elves don't *seem* evil, but . . . if they really were the ones who started this war, then maybe the Dark Elves were just fighting back? So confusing . . . I guess I see why Father didn't want to get involved, but I'm not going to tell him that.

MORE NOTES:

Svartáljǫfurr, the Dark Elf king, kept popping up in the Alfheim trench and Ringed Temple to direct his winged soldier minions to attack us. After Father finally snagged the Light, we nearly made it back to our boat, but the dark king popped up again, this time to fight us himself.

After the battle, as he lay on the floor dying, his last words made my stomach sink. The Elven Wars must be a lot more complicated than anyone can know.

Valkyrie

These spirits appear after we kill their physical forms, which act as some sort of prison. The spirits have no control over their bodies, which are *really* powerful. The hardest monsters we've ever faced, and they're inhabited by peaceful spirits. Go figure.

MORE NOTES:

Valkyries are so amazing! We found four imprisoned inside Odin's hidden chambers in Midgard, and one each inside the hidden chambers in Alfheim and Helheim. We survived a bunch of trials in Muspelheim to find a seventh Valkyrie, and then searched through the cursed blight of Niflheim to find the eighth.

After we defeated all of these Valkyries, liberating each one's spirit from its corrupted physical form, we delivered their eight helmets to the Council of Valkyries on the north shore of the Lake of Nine. That's where we finally faced the Valkyrie queen herself, Sigrun. What a battle!

Gunnr

Mimir said of Gunnr: *"Mistress of War. After any conflict, big or small, she would be first on the scene, sussing out the worthy spirits for a free trip to Valhalla. A gruesome task, but she took great pride in it. Her judgment of the fallen was unparalleled, and an invaluable resource to Odin. She was one of his favorites."*

Location	Thamur's corpse (hidden chamber near the dock)
Fighter Type	None

Geirdriful

Mimir said of Geirdriful: *"Master of Arms in Valhalla. Responsible for arming and training Odin's einherjar—his army, come Ragnarök. The einherjar wait in the great hall, endlessly feasting, drinking, and fu—ahem, uh . . . fornicating themselves silly. Once Ragnarök begins, Odin calls them into service to fight on his behalf. Geirdriful had her hands full training that lot."*

Location	Foothills (hidden chamber, turn right at the split in the path)
Fighter Type	Shooter

Eir

Mimir said of Eir: *"The Healer. Strange, for a Valkyrie. Very quiet. Very calm. Where her sisters were violent rapids, Eir was a gentle stream. She healed the wounds of both mortals and gods . . . and even a certain all-knowing sage who once drank too much and fell off a mountain."*

Location	Inside the Mountain (hidden chamber near the corner elevator, floor level)
Fighter Type	Defender

Kara

Mimir said of Kara: *"Wild Storm personified. Calm and collected . . . Then the air would shift, and the fury of her storm would unleash. 'Twas beautiful, in a way, assuming you could find proper shelter. Her tears would cleanse the blood-soaked battlefields."*

Location	River Pass (hidden chamber in Freya's cavern—we needed shock *and* light arrows to reach it)
Fighter Type	Summoner (summons Draugr!)

Ròta

Mimir said of Ròta: *"One of the Choosers of the Slain. Ròta was the first to go mad after being imprisoned in a physical form. Sigrun stashed her in Helheim to keep her away from harming herself or others. Mostly others."*

Location	Helheim (hidden chamber—had to fire a shock arrow at a shatter crystal to gain access)
Fighter Type	Grappler

Olrun

Mimir said of Olrun: *"Once the daughter of a powerful chieftain, she fell defending him during a Reaver attack. Olrun was escorted to Valhalla, where she chose to devote her afterlife to the pursuit of knowledge above all else. Quite unusual behavior among the constant drinking and feasting of her fellow Valhallian denizens. Odin saw a kindred spirit in Olrun's single-minded pursuit of knowledge and appointed her as the Valkyries' resident historian."*

Location	Alfheim (hidden chamber in a secret area at the Light Elf Shore)
Fighter Type	Evader

Göndul

Mimir said of Göndul: *"The sight of Göndul always took my breath away. Göndul had a silver tongue, a sharp wit, and struck a figure so stunning, it literally drove men insane. Odin forbade her from setting foot in Midgard after a time, as insanity is not a welcome trait in Valhalla."*

Location	Muspelheim (Trial VI)
Fighter Type	Fire

Hildr

Mimir said of Hildr: *"Mistress of Battle. She and Odin got on quite well, actually. She and the other Valkyries . . . not so much. She would spend most of her time here in Midgard, observing discord between the living and stirring some up herself from time to time. She lived for conflict. Some say she was conflict personified. I wonder what will become of her, now that she's free."*

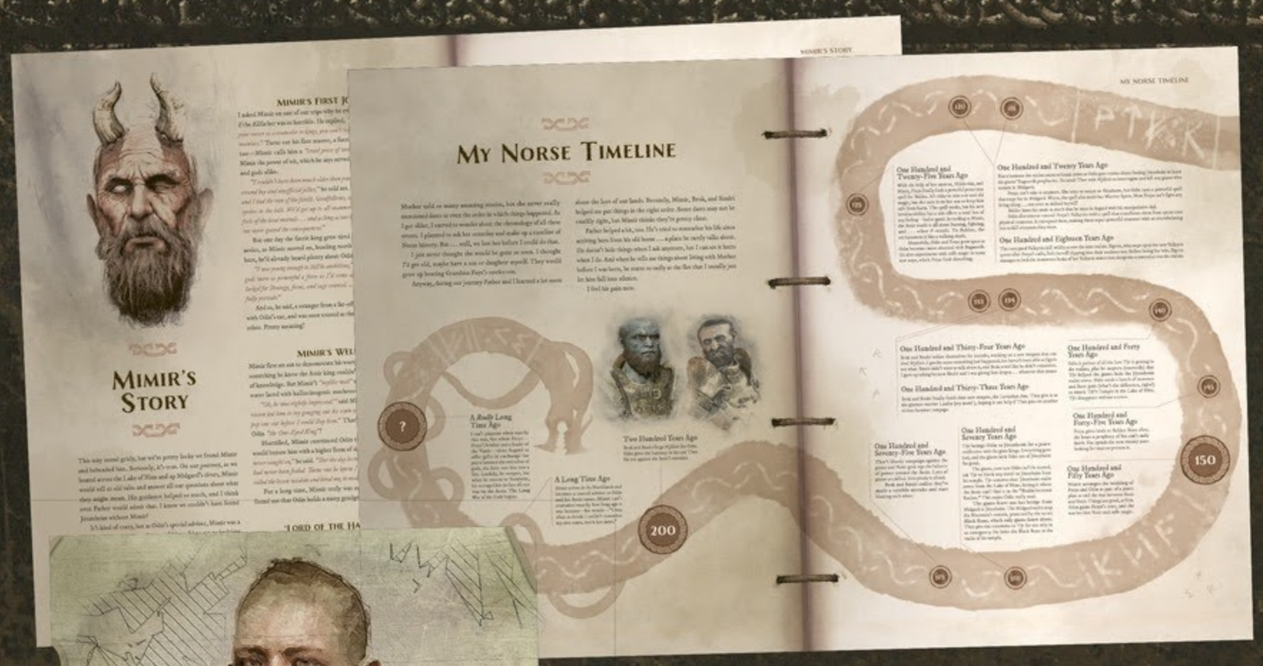
Location	Niflheim (northwest area)
Fighter Type	Ice

Sigrun

The Valkyrie Queen

Mimir said of Sigrun: *"Queen of the Valkyries, although she does not appear to refer to herself as such. When Freya, the original queen Valkyrie, lost her wings to Odin, Sigrun grudgingly took the position in her stead. Now she is free to reunite the Valkyries and attempt to stem the tide of the dead flowing into Midgard."*

Location	Council of Valkyries (cliff above the Lake of Nine's north shore beach, west of Njörd's oarsmen)
Fighter Type	All Valkyrie moves combined!



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